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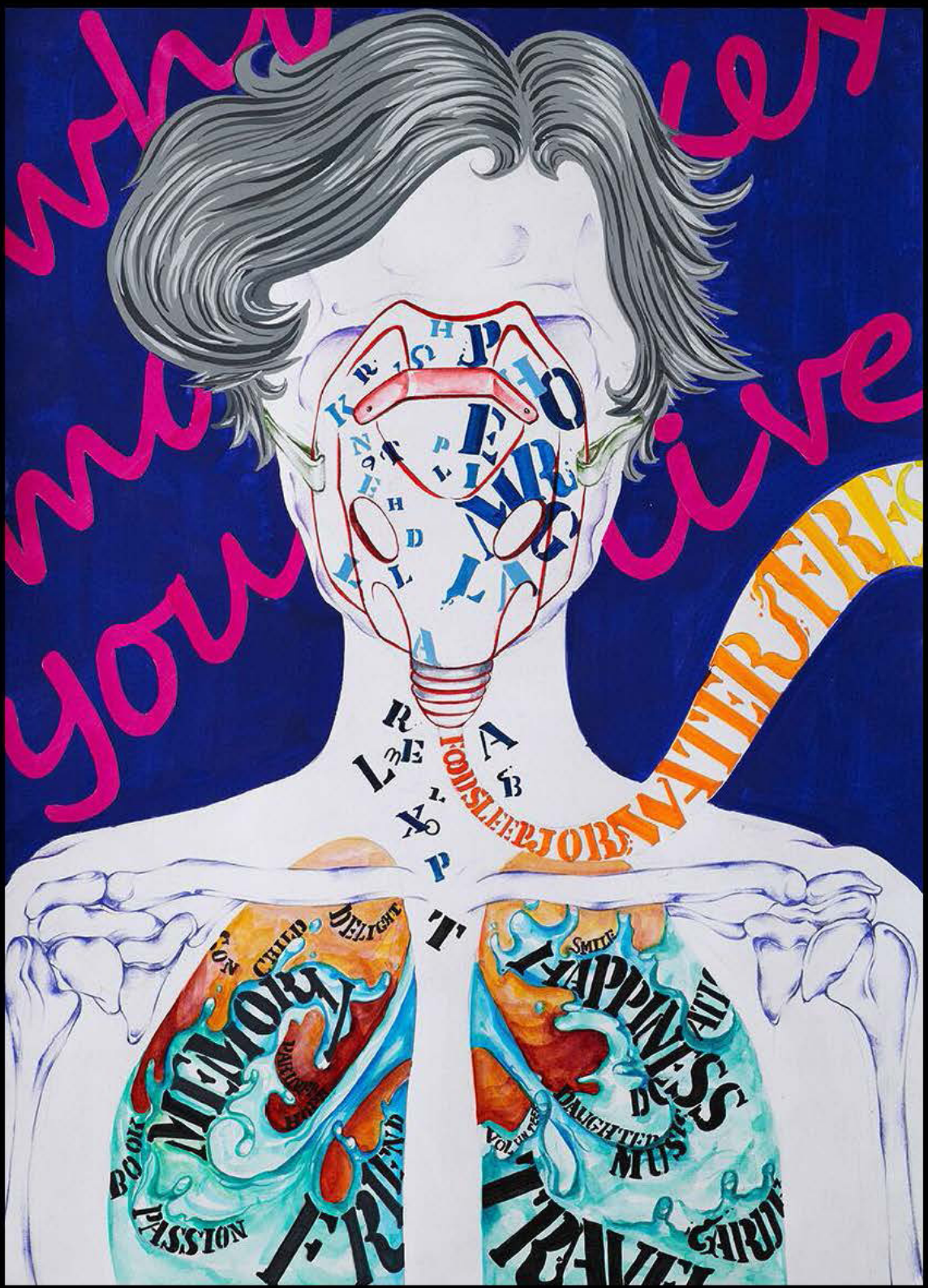

The Student Journal of Art and Literature

Vol. XIII
Spring 2016

Calliope

The Student Journal of Art and Literature
Volume XIII - Spring 2016

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We are also proud to announce that this marks the first year that *Calliope* has included students as part of the scoring process. *Calliope* teamed up with students--Lameece Elmasri, Nick Vrooman, Harry Hooper, and Wagieda Elhag--from the English Specialization, and our journal is better for having done so. We hope this is the beginning of a long-term collaboration between our English faculty and students.

Our thank you also goes to the many students who submitted their creative efforts for consideration. It is only through their courage and diligence that *Calliope* continues to materialize. We received many fine works this year but were limited in the number of entries we could publish. We hope, however, that students will persist in submitting their works to future editions of *Calliope*.

The *Calliope* Committee extends special appreciation to Annandale faculty and staff in the following offices, divisions, and committees for their continued and generous support of this endeavor:

- The Office of the Provost
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Submissions are welcomed from September through January each year at Calliope@nvcc.edu. Submission guidelines are available at http://www.nvcc.edu/calliope. Calliope reserves the right to reprint and present submitted works on the Calliope website and other media. Students interested in joining the Calliope staff as interns should contact the editors at the address above.

calliope *kal<e>i:opi. U.S. (Gr. Kallioph)*

(beautiful-voiced), the ninth of the Muses,
presiding over eloquence and heroic poetry.

1. An instrument consisting of a series of
steam-whistles toned to produce musical notes,
played by a keyboard like that of an organ;

2. attrib. calliope hummingbird,
a hummingbird, sellula ***calliope***, of the
Western United States and Mexico.
Oxford English Dictionary

Calliope First Prize 2016 - Poetry

Alexandra Nava-Ruiz Tecco

An Individual's Spectrum

You may as well be light.
Not the light of a 40-watt, dull and dim,
trying vainly to pierce the shadows
of a dusty litter strewn room.

But sunlight, playing off the gurgling ripples of a river.
The light that bakes the children brown
as they play in its summer rays.

The magic given to vegetables in the garden,
leaves transforming light to grow, to ripen,
to sweeten the strawberries.

The dappled light of a forest,
produced by tree tops undulating in the breeze,
green eventually fading, then falling;
their crimson symphony dying away.

Still you remain, thin light now.
The silent winter sun, half-hidden by clouds,
casting the world in shades of white and gray,
everything surreal and haunting--

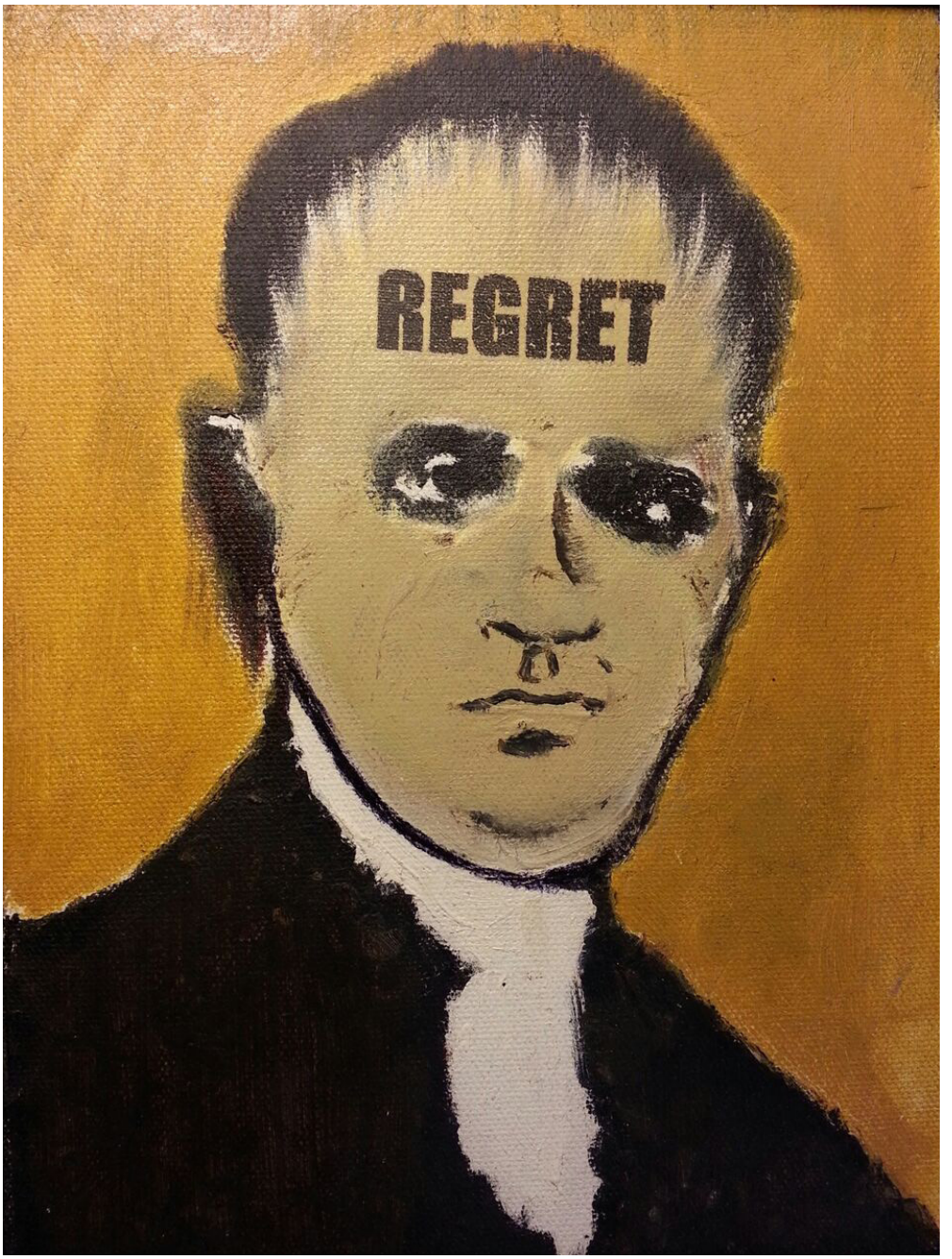
Like the moon, reflecting in your eyes
while thoughts, frigid as winter
and quick as the speed of "I forget"
play through your mind; tattling on you,
shifting, revealing the truth.

You blink and I trip in the darkness,
falling into the cold,
and land hard,
lost.

Calliope First Prize 2016 - Artwork

Allison Darcie Velez

Regret



Oil Painting

Calliope Second Prize 2016 - Poetry

Alexandra Nava-Ruiz Tecco

Medicating

Sometimes I line them up like a rainbow,

each little pill arcing across the nightstand,

a multicolored cocktail of mind altering drugs

prescribed to enable me to "be more myself."

At a party I marvel at the mess of the bar:

spirits of all sorts, heights, colors, flavors:

"Pick your poison."

I watch them get drunk and wonder

"Are they more themselves now too?"

Calliope First Prize 2016 - ESL Poetry & Prose

Thao Thanh Trinh

My Memorable Place

In my life, I have spent a lot of time hanging out with my friends at different places. However, nowhere on earth can replace a special place of our adolescence where none of us can ever forget the smell of brown tea and condensed milk. It's a small beverage shop named Feeling Tea.

It was a small old building near the center of Ho Chi Minh city where the owner decided to open the shop. The outside of the shop was poorly decorated. There was a rusty sign on top with the name "Feeling Tea" printed on it. Next to the door was a dirty chalkboard with bad handwriting that described the special menu for that day, which has never changed for years. In spite of the unattractive appearance, you will smell a sweet scent of tea and milk coffee if you walk by the shop. However, since the shop had very few customers, I guess that the bad decoration chased away customers more than the scent welcomed them.

On the inside, there were two floors. The first one had a bar which was very noisy when the staff started using the juicer. It was hard to hear your friend's voice so not many people chose to sit at the bar. But a plus point was that the bar had a colorful row of fruit syrup bottles. The bottles released a lovely smell of fruit every time the staff opened them. That's why people sometimes liked to sit there when they came alone. The second floor had an open room and a room with air-conditioning. Both rooms' walls were painted in white and orange colors. However the white paint was old and stained; therefore, it looked like a pale-yellow color now. The soft brown sofas looked homey and comfortable under a yellow warm light. They were paired with white coffee tables and divided for couples or groups of four to six people. Although the threadbare sofas were time-worn and had a lot of stains, they made me feel welcome like I was sitting at home.

My best friends and I went to Feeling Tea a lot even though it was not the best beverage shop in our city. The main reason was its location in the city center was convenient for all of us. Secondly, there were not so many customers so we always had a private space. In addition, the waitresses there were very friendly. We usually went to Feeling Tea three times a week to play board games, watch movies on our laptops, or just to chat. The shop was not only where we laughed together, played together, but also where we cried and sought solace from our friends. This was our special place where we shared our mistakes, our feelings, and our joys together.

Everyone has an unforgettable place in his or her heart. For us, it is Feeling Tea. Even though the shop was small and obsolete, it's still the most special place of mine. The more I miss my friends, the more I miss it--the place where I saved beautiful memories of the teenage me.

This artwork has been withdrawn from the competition.

Watercolor & Adobe Photoshop

Calliope First Prize 2016 - Nonfiction

Alexandra Nava-Ruiz Tecco

Crossings at the Paso del Norte

Once a month my family would travel to Juarez Mexico to visit my Nina, my godmother. Crossing the border was a 1,100-foot affair of American and Mexican border crossing agents and the Paso del Norte Bridge. The bridge spans the Rio Grande River, the line between the U.S. and Mexico.

My Nina lived in a poor neighborhood in Juarez. The journey there and back was a "lock your car doors" and a "keep your windows up" affair. Mom's orders; no matter how hot the desert day was.

Our station wagon's driving music was a cassette tape of Billboard's top hits from the 50s. Coloring books distracted sis during the drive. I watched the poverty and their people walking in time to Buddy Holly or The Big Bopper.

My dad loved to tell stories about growing up in Arizona and California. He'd mesmerize us with tales, smiles and laughter, impersonating each character, humorous fables woven from the dark situations of his childhood. Our monthly trips to see Nina were the only time he preferred silently listening to music. Dad's stories, the distance of time stripped from them, were alive and walking outside of our car.

Our visit with Nina complete, we'd return to the Paso del Norte Bridge. It was impossible to tell how long the crossing would take. Sometimes it was 30 minutes, sometimes 2 hours of traffic.

Stuck in traffic on the Mexican side, awaiting the U.S. Border Patrol's "Welcome back to America," we'd watch as pregnant women, the disabled and dirt-smudged children would weave their way between bumpers. Each, more a beggar than street vendor, would hawk their wares via Spanish or accented English. Windshield washing and sodas were the adults' usual wares. The children almost always sold candy.

My dad would buy us Chiclets, chewing gum, paying with green, American currency instead of the requested dime. He'd speak to the juvenile candy dealers in friendly Spanish and a smile in front of his memories. Crossing complete, we would usually stop at the closest place to eat: a Jack in the Box.

Getting across the bridge this time took longer than usual. The desert sun's heat was quickly ebbing into the deep chill of its night. It was late, well past dinner time.

My father led us into the fast food joint. It was filled with travelers grabbing a bite to eat before crossing to or from Mexico. Most of the weary patrons were people deemed worthy of a U.S. work permit. Some of those precious U.S. dollars earned by day were used to create the dinner rush for that Jack in the Box's paper-hatted staff.

As soon as we squeezed in I could feel the eyes. Our clothes were too new, too clean, too American-department-store. I tried to ignore the children, studying us, following our movements. They had the same Chiclet-selling eyes as the kids on the bridge, helping make ends meet in 10¢ increments. The remaining gum felt awkward in my pocket.

I snuck glances at the grown-up's eyes, weary, but considered lucky. They were like lottery winners, the prize being legally allowed to work in the U.S.

I transferred from my mom's hand to my dad's as he looked up at the menu.

"I'm not hungry," I said, hoping to avoid more attention, but mostly trying not to sound ungrateful.

The constricting knots in my stomach made my shoes very interesting. Dad looked from the menu to me and gave a reassuring smile. Squeezing my hand, his attention returned forward, to the menu and the counter.

The father of the family in front of us ordered.

Ordering fast food is fairly universal, regardless of language. Order given. Amount due responded. Money exchanged.

However, after the clerk played his part the father in front of us stopped. He looked to his wife, to the crumpled bills in his hand, then back to the menu. Finally, he looked at clerk and began ordering again.

It was different, fewer words.

My dad stepped forward, ignoring the clerk's look, and spoke to the father.

The father had big hands, callused, with thick, strong, hardworking fingers and dirty nails. He held his daughter gently in a single arm. She was my sister's age, same sun-soaked complexion, but quiet with large, watching eyes. Her brother, around my age, was tall, a recent growth spurt evident by his high water pants. The mother seemed tired as she bent under the weight of a large, woven-plastic bag.

My dad's Spanish rolled off quick and gentle as he spoke to the father and mother. Still holding my hand, Dad placed his other on my head, then gestured to my sister, my mom and then settled delicately onto his chest. The father and mother stood straight, listening to my dad, their proud eyes softening into a mutual understanding.

The Spanish flowed between them all, too fast for me to decipher.

The father's slight nod and hint of an awkward smile was sufficient to move my dad past all of us to the counter and its clerk.

We managed to find a space for the eight of us to sit together. My dad and the father brought us the overflowing trays. It was a fast-food feast. Combo meals, kids' meals, desserts, everything my dad could think of that might be desired.

While eating the adults talked, boring adult stuff. Even in Spanish it sounded the same.

The children, fed, happy, shyness gone, started talking to my sister and me. They only spoke Spanish. The communication attempts ended quickly, all of us disappointed. Our attentions turned to the plastic toys from the kid's meals. The swooshing sounds of sword, clangs of blocked weapons, eeeks of retreat and booms of imagined explosions mixed with our laughter; language barrier moot and forgotten.

Eventually, paper food-wrappers crumpled, tummies happy and drinks refilled for the road, the eight of us made our way outside. While parents exchanged handshakes and Spanish, my sister and I tried the best we could with our counterparts, using the meager Spanish we knew.

"Adios," we told them.

"Adios," they responded.

My family watched them walk underneath the yellow streetlights, making their way to the Paso del Norte Bridge, to Mexico. As I watched them Dad gave my hand a squeeze.

It was our turn to leave and so we did.

Driving home, the lights of El Paso disappearing behind us, the black of the desert swallowed everything except the stars. They scattered overhead, beyond number, more stars on that highway than anywhere else I'd see.

I sat up front with Dad. Mom and sis dozed in the back.

"Why did you do that?" I asked.

Dad glanced over to read the context in my face. He took a steadying breath.

"They ordered four cheeseburgers. One for each of them. But they didn't have enough money. Then he ordered two. They wanted to feed their kids. The mother and father hadn't eaten all day though," he said.

"How did you know they didn't eat?" I asked.

He shrugged. "I'm the oldest of my brothers and sisters. We didn't always have enough food, but I always made sure the five of them were fed. Sometimes that meant I didn't eat."

He continued looking forward, our yellow headlights barely piercing the desert night.

"You take care of the people you love. If we were in the same position, your mom and I, we would do the same for you girls."

He looked at me. "Does that make sense?" he asked, then turned back to the road.

I paused, reflecting, studying the white lines. I nodded.

The dashboard lights illuminated Dad's face a pale green as his jaw clenched, then loosened, then clenched again.

"What did you tell him? Wasn't he embarrassed?" I asked.

Dad took another long breath in, then out. He was looking forward, watching the road, but not.

"I told him that I've been there. The hard times. Providing for a family. Not knowing where your next meal's coming from. That it would be good will for me if they would join us for dinner."

A pinprick of light in the distance was growing larger. Another car, moving toward us. Dad's tears escaped then before disappearing with the brush of his hand.

The other car's lights were upon us, our interior flooded by the high beams they didn't turn off. I looked away, to the right, where the black asphalt met the sand to save myself from going blind. Then the lights were gone.

"Are you crying Daddy?"

"No," he said, wiping his face again. "That car's lights..."

He drove, neither of us speaking. I turned away, to the black outside, trying to ignore that harsh single syllable and my curiosity about the lie that followed. Instead I looked out and up, watching for a shooting star, listening to the sound of the wind, the engine.

"Sometimes," he said, barely audible, "when I was growing up, the only thing that got me by, made me believe there was something better, were the times someone helped me. It can... mean a lot."

He didn't speak again, but reached over and put his arm around me and squeezed, then his hands were back at ten and two.

I leaned my head against the cool glass and matched his gaze, looking forward. As we drove, the white lines appeared continually out of the black of I-10 in front of us. In front, beside, then gone, each line eventually faded to just one more memory amongst all the rest in the black of the desert night behind us.

Calliope Third Prize 2016 - Artwork

Jessica Meyers

Harmonious

Color Photography

Calliope First Prize 2016 - Fiction

Jason Jisu Lee

Second Intelligent World

"I need to get this refilled," Blue whispered to himself as he shook an empty pill container and shoved it into his pocket. There were two other people sitting in the room. Across from Blue's seat was a man with fidgety hands who kept squirming in his seat. He had an open magazine on his lap though it was clear that he wasn't reading. He was blankly staring at the wall.

"Do you see it too?" the anxious man suddenly inquired.

"I'm sorry?"

"Do you see…the ghost?" The man nervously looked at Blue who was steadily looking back at him. "Of course you don't." The man covered his face with his hands and fell silent, overwhelmed with disappointment.

Blue put a sympathetic look on his face. Then he realized that the man couldn't see him, so he tried to come up with words to console him when someone innocently remarked,

"I thought you weren't supposed to see ghosts."

The comment was rather needlessly inconsiderate. The man sitting to Blue's right had a diminutive face and had a somewhat comical feature. Moreover, he had an air of pseudo-scholar who always contributes in the beginning of a conversation but never says anything truly meaningful.

"Who are you to say that I'm not supposed to see ghosts?" the anxious man demanded.

"Mason Diamond. I'm a scholar," Mason proudly answered.

"Uh… Light Vinson… You don't sound like a scholar," complained Light. "But I'm definitely seeing what can only be described as a ghost."

"Hmm. Okay…" Mason half-heartedly contemplated and let Blue answer, pleased with the difference he made that day. "What do you think?"

"Well it seems like Light is hopelessly hallucinating," Blue reasoned in a calm and flat voice.

"I agree," Mason helpfully added.

"I'm not hallucinating!" protested Light whose eyes frantically roamed around Mason's surroundings as if there were something to be chased in the air. Mason uneasily looked around.

"Light, visual hallucination is a symptom present in serious illnesses. You are ill. My guess is that there is an underlying mental disorder. I suggest you see a psychiatrist," Blue advised.

Mason was a man of science and up to that point, Mason thought Light was indeed seeing things. But Mason, being a brilliant scholar, wanted to consider every possibility before disregarding the idea.

"Now, wait a minute. Light may be nuts but we might be able to help. Light, maybe you could describe the ghost for us," Mason carefully suggested.

"Well, it has a shape of a small person and it's covered in a transparent white sheet."

"Okay, what is it doing?"

"Floating."

"Where is it… floating?" Mason fearfully asked.

"Right next to you."

"What!?" Mason was alarmed. "Why is it next to me?" Light merely shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know where you're going with this, Mason," said Blue.

"Do you think it can… hurt people?" Mason was getting anxious by the minute.

"Probably, I don't know. You're the one next to it," Light apathetically observed aloud.

Mason was suddenly furious; so furious that he forgot his noble intentions which soon turned into uncertainty and confusion. "He's utterly mad! An insane lunatic! Are you-are you listening to this?" Mason could not stand such nonsense. He desperately asked for help from Blue who was still deciding whether Mason was a real scholar or a complete moron.

"I wouldn't be insane if I were an 'insane lunatic.' Only regular lunatics are insane," Light reasonably speculated and ruefully snickered. "I think you're scared that I might be right, that there is Bob–I named it Bob–right next to you, and that you might be the crazy one because you can't see it."

"Wait, you named it?" Blue asked Light.

Mason was paying no attention that. "What!? You're the one saying there's a ghost–"

"Bob." Light corrected Mason.

"–that there's Bob– I mean a ghost here," Mason corrected himself.

"Yea, but you-Hey!" Light abruptly yelled mid-sentence and startled Mason who also started yelling.

"W-What!? What is it?"

"Bob just left the room! It went through the wall!" Light maniacally shouted, pointing at the wall and turning back and forth between Blue and Mason as if there were a protocol for such a situation.

Mason spoke his mind out loud, "Oh, good."

"Why is that good?"

"Uh... For you, I mean. It doesn't matter to me because, you know, Bob doesn't exist." Mason confidently muttered an explanation under his breath as Light suspiciously stared at him.

"The ghost," Blue correct Mason.

"–because I know the ghost doesn't exist," Mason corrected himself.

The three men sat there still, silently staring at the wall where Bob supposedly went through. Light hoped Bob would come back. Maybe this time they will see it.

Meanwhile, Mason was dealing with his reluctant ambiguity about Bob's existence. He pondered about the possibility of insanity penetrating his scholarly mind. Blue thinks Light is hallucinating. Light thinks Bob just went through that damn wall. One of them had to be insane.

Blue inexplicably empathized with Light and genuinely hoped that he gets better. He couldn't care less about the argument and simply wished that poor Mason would shut up. Mason was the first to break the brief silence.

"Blue, I think you are insane," Mason declared, using the same calm and flat tone as Blue's.

"What?"

"You are ill. My guess is that there is an underlying mental–"

"Mason," Blue cut him off. "I'm not insane and neither are you. Are you saying that you can see the ghost?"

"No, no," Mason dismissively laughed it off. "But I decided to believe in Bob. I figured all I had to do to avoid being insane was agree with only one of you. You see, insanity is a relative term. It doesn't matter who's really crazy. All it takes for you to be insane are two disagreeing maniacs. And, pragmatically speaking, it's better to assume that danger is present."

"Bob's not dangerous," Light defensively intervened.

"Your stupid ghost is clearly dangerous," argued Mason.

Blue was deeply vexed by Mason's pseudo-scholarly philosophical nonsense that was nearly smart enough to convince Blue that he was a madman. Mason and Light chuckled annoyingly, watching Blue's composed face turn red. Then they chuckled a little more.

"You two are maniacs," cried Blue, inadvertently making himself insane by Mason's logic. The two men ridiculed Blue as they laughed their brains out. Chuckles turned to shrieks of laughter that kept getting louder until it turned to deranged, demonic scream.

"Stop, stop!" Blue screamed in panic. Blue covered his ears which only made the noise louder. A manic grin distorted Mason's face and Light's eyeballs started to melt. Blue felt his body heating up. Blue closed his eyes. But he could still see them, he could still see them, he could still see–

"Blue?" An unmistakable voice of sanity. Blue, hyperventilating, opened his eyes and looked up from his seat.

"I apologize for the wait; it was an emergency call." His psychiatrist was standing there, staring him down with his right hand on the open door. "I'll write you another prescription for your condition. Were you hallucinating again?"

Blue slowly nodded. "…Visual, auditory, thermoceptive... Worst episode so far." Blue finally put his hands down from his ears with an absent expression on his face.

The psychiatrist closed the door and sat behind the main desk. "It's all in our head," he told Blue as he tapped his index finger onto his head. "I dealt with myriads of patients with far worse mental defects–those of which should not exist in a world governed by natural selection. Unfortunately we live in an unnatural world governed by sexual selection. The point is, they still get better with appropriate medications and surgeries. There doesn't seem to be any improvements for you, which means there's something more than abnormal neurological condition or hormonal imbalance. You are ill, Blue, because you're rejecting the social standard. You're living in a different world."

The psychiatrist signed the prescription and put it on the desk for Blue who was still quietly sitting on his chair with the same absent expression. He couldn't stop thinking about Light and Mason.

"Blue are you ok? It was that bad, huh?"

Blue eventually stood up and said, "Yea, I just… you know I was unhappy for a very long time because I thought I was insane, because there was something wrong with my mental state. But I just realized that it wasn't my mental state that dictated my sanity–it was people. It's not in my limits to say what's sane or insane. But it is in my ability to decide what's sane or not, what's right or wrong, for myself. You can't cure me, because I'm not ill."

Blue sincerely thanked him and walked out of the room. As he left the building, he thought he saw something–something that can only be described as a ghost–I mean… Bob.

Luis Antonio Navas Reyes

Childhood Memories

Acrylic Painting

Calliope Third Prize 2016 - Poetry

Jessica Briggs

Syria's Widow

When the uprisings come, I stay on the back porch at night,
watching all the light in our city come out. I peer through my black hijab, carrying so many bags under my eyes, searching.

My fingers stretch to heaven and touch the floor, a prayer I hold.
These nights brush cold air, waves around me.
But you come home.
You are tired, yet never forget to greet me with a kiss.
When it touches my lips, peace is spoken to all that's shaking inside. The bags under my eyes lift.

What we carry on our backs, our hands, and eyes, from our country, is heavy and few.
You have become my Syria, and I will never leave you.
We work all our time, building a house with coins, in country,
not home.
We sell all we hold, for the journey to follow, freedom.

I remember a boat, how over a hundred of us were packed inside. I saw money then provide, no compensation or promise. The smuggler's eyes stared at our pockets, our hands, missing our hearts, individual.

I remember a boat, it hit a rock, and the screams were the only thing the water let in—we were so tight.
But you never let me go, giving my body the last warmth of an embrace.

My greatest fear used to be of drowning, of getting bloated, arms with fingers stretching, all swollen up.
I never learned to swim well, but you could swim an ocean if it meant you'd reach me.
You were strong enough to pull me through that boat's window, and stay our love, breathing.

Then what you did next, I will always regret.
You gave your life vest to another.
Those hours will never be longer.
The hours we swam together in the water.
You got tired, you lay on your back.
The waves came reaching and broke, our hands.
My voice is still hoarse from screaming at the tempest
to bring you back. I would never leave you.

A boat finds me, but not my love. You are my Syria
and I lost you.

Calliope Second Prize 2016 - Nonfiction

Edna Squire

Detached From Reality

I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach as soon as our taxi pulled up to the pier. It looked as barren as the Sahara desert. Being a seasoned cruiser who has traveled to six continents on cruise ships, I knew something was drastically wrong. The normal hurried bustle of an impending cruise was vacant. I wondered if we were at the wrong pier. My son, Julian, and daughter, Jillian, waited in the taxi with me while my husband ran frantically up and down the pier to locate a staff member to assist us. I asked the driver to be patient just in case we needed to go to another pier. He assured me that we were at the only pier that cruises departed from in Boston. Meanwhile, the meter continued to tick away.

A woman in her late 60s appeared from the building where passengers prepare to embark on their cruise. She had on a blue jacket embroidered with a cruise line insignia. A blonde beehive hairdo was mounted on the top of her head. I jumped out of the cab and ran towards her.

"Ma'am!" I shouted, "Can you please help us?"

She looked over her black framed cat glasses. "How can I help you honey?"

"We are supposed to board our cruise here. We were to leave at 5:00 p.m. and it is only 4:05 p.m. I'm not sure what's going on."

"Come with me honey!" she said, reaching for her walkie-talkie as she ran towards a little booth.

As the children and I prepared to follow her, my husband, Gregg, returned, paid the cab driver and helped us gather our luggage out of the trunk of the taxi. As we reached the booth, I noticed that the woman was still on her walkie-talkie and as she talked, she kept sizing us all up through her cat-shaped glasses, and whispering back into the walkie-talkie.

"Do you have your passports?" she said to us finally.

"Yes, ma'am!" I said, and as I answered her, I turned to my left and noticed bobbing in all her glory, the MS MAASDAM, one of Holland America's signature ships. Before I could finish taking in all of its splendor, a stocky man with slicked back dark oily hair appeared from around the corner and announced, "I can get you there, but it won't be pretty."

In response to his offer, we ran behind him, dragging our luggage down the bumpy pier plank, until we were standing in front of a small pilot boat traditionally used to guide cruise ships out of the port.

"Put your life jackets on and come up here!" he bellowed, and then, together with another man who had showed up, helped us board the pilot boat. As the boat began circling the cruise ship, large waves crashed on its sides and I felt my stomach churn, especially after the portly man cleared his throat, sounding like a trumpet. I was as confused as a deer in headlights. I gave my husband a look of bewilderment.

"Ma'am, you come first!" said the portly gentleman, even as the boat continued moving around the ship.

I put on my life jacket and looked up, and at that moment, realized what the man had meant when he said "it won't be pretty." There was a rope ladder dangling from the side of the MS MAASDAM like a flag blowing in the wind. On the ship's decks were several of the passengers conversing amongst themselves, holding glasses of margaritas, piña coladas and daiquiris. The man grabbed the rope ladder with one hand, and my hand with the other and moved my hand towards the ladder. Trembling like a swan in freezing temperatures, I grabbed the ladder with both hands and gingerly put one foot on the ladder's step. The passengers on the decks had now halted their conversations to focus their attention on watching a middle-aged woman climbing a rope ladder on the side of a cruise ship. At that moment though, I couldn't care less about the embarrassment I was suffering. My only focus was on the danger in front of me. One missed step and I could meet my maker.

It seemed like hours passed while I hovered over the river. All of the passengers and staff were now on deck. Men, women, and children were cheering me on as I waged my battle against a watery grave. When I finally reached the top of the ladder, a bubbly, attractive woman who I later found out was the cruise director gave me a big hug.

"You made it! Welcome aboard!" she shouted.

"Thank you," I said, "please make sure my children make it aboard," I told her. "And do whatever you want with my husband."

My eleven-year-old daughter ascended up the ladder with the agility of a gymnast.

"Whew!" she said, when she reached the top of the rope ladder. "May I have the soda that you promised me?"

I don't normally allow sodas, but I had promised that she could have one when we were on vacation.

My fourteen-year-old son has a fear of heights. He adjusted his glasses nervously as he prepared for his perilous journey up the rope ladder.

"Will dad be alright?" he asked as he made it inside the MS MAASDAM.

The morning had started off very peacefully. We had arrived in Boston from Virginia the previous Friday night. Our cruise to Canada was to start on that Saturday at 5:00 pm. We had planned a tour of Boston, prior to our cruise. My husband and teenagers arose early that Saturday and left to explore Boston by foot and grab a bite to eat. I was exhausted, so I decided to sleep in. Prior to our vacation, I had spent several hours packing, stopping the mail and verifying last minute details. I felt deserving of the extra Zs. My family returned with breakfast for me. I ate and then we ventured out on a guided tour of Boston. The tour guide was garbed in revolutionary gear and regaled us with stories of Boston's early history.

Before leaving for the tour, we had packed and left our bags with the concierge at Marriott's Boston Copley Plaza Hotel, so that we could expeditiously get to our cruise ship. On our way back to the hotel, my husband came up with the bright idea of taking my son to the famous TD GARDEN where the NBA's Boston Celtics play basketball.

"We are not going to have enough time, you'll have to go the next time that we are in Boston," I said.

"We'll be fine. We have enough time. I just want to get some pictures in front of The Garden," he replied. "We'll have enough time to get back to the hotel, retrieve our bags, and get a taxi to the pier."

"I don't feel comfortable with this," I said. "Jillian and I are going back to the hotel to get our bags and head off to the pier," I said.

"I'm taking Julian to The Garden! We'll meet you back at the hotel," he insisted.

"We're gonna leave you if you're not back by 3:00 p.m." I warned him. "The cruise leaves at 5:00 p.m., but passengers have to embark by 4:00 p.m."

My daughter and I were at the hotel at 3:15 p.m. when my husband called.

"We're stuck in traffic," he said.

"Jillian and I are going to leave without the two of you. We'll see you at the pier!" I said. "I have all of the passports." he said.

"What?"

"I have all of the passports. You might as well wait for us."

A few hours later, as I watched my husband climb up the ladder, I tried to think of a punishment worthy of the humiliation the children and I had suffered. I envisioned something painful, something that wouldn't land me in jail. Perhaps he could be devoured by an indigenous creature beneath the river. In the meantime though, after we had been given refreshments and escorted to our suite, I had to devise a plan to make myself unidentifiable to the other passengers during the cruise. It was the beginning of July, and a hat and trench coat wouldn't cut it. I thought I could blend in with the other people of color on the ship, but unfortunately, there were very few people of color on the ship, and we stood out like pumpkins on Valentine's Day. There was no place to hide.

Later that day, when we went to pick up tickets for a family excursion, the man behind the ticket desk pointed at us and started roaring with laughter. "I bet you're on Facebook or YouTube by now!" he said.

I tried to shield my discomfort by smiling. I took the tickets, and we proceeded to dinner. I had asked that our family be seated alone, but this didn't protect us. As soon as we entered the dining room, the volume of voices increased as diners snickered amongst themselves and pointed fingers at us. Then the cruise director came over to our table and said, "I told all of our staff to drop what they were doing, when you climbed up the ladder, because they would never see something like this again."

I had one question for her. "Why did the lady with the beehive hairdo stare at us so intently when she was on her walkie-talkie?"

"The captain wanted to know if you looked fit enough to climb up the rope ladder," she said laughing. "He was asking for a detailed description of your family."

I smiled and thanked her for helping us make the ship. As we were about to order dinner, three elderly women approached our table.

"Did you hear us cheering for you?" said one of the women.

"I thought you were going to fall," said another woman. We chatted briefly and they returned to their table.

A few minutes into our dinner, an elderly gentleman approached our table and said, "We taped the whole thing. I have a roll of pictures of you guys getting on the boat. Do you want them?"

My husband accepted, surmising that after the brunt of the embarrassment was over, we might be able to laugh about it.

After the gentleman left our table, my husband glanced over at me and said, "This would not have happened, if you hadn't stayed in bed all morning."

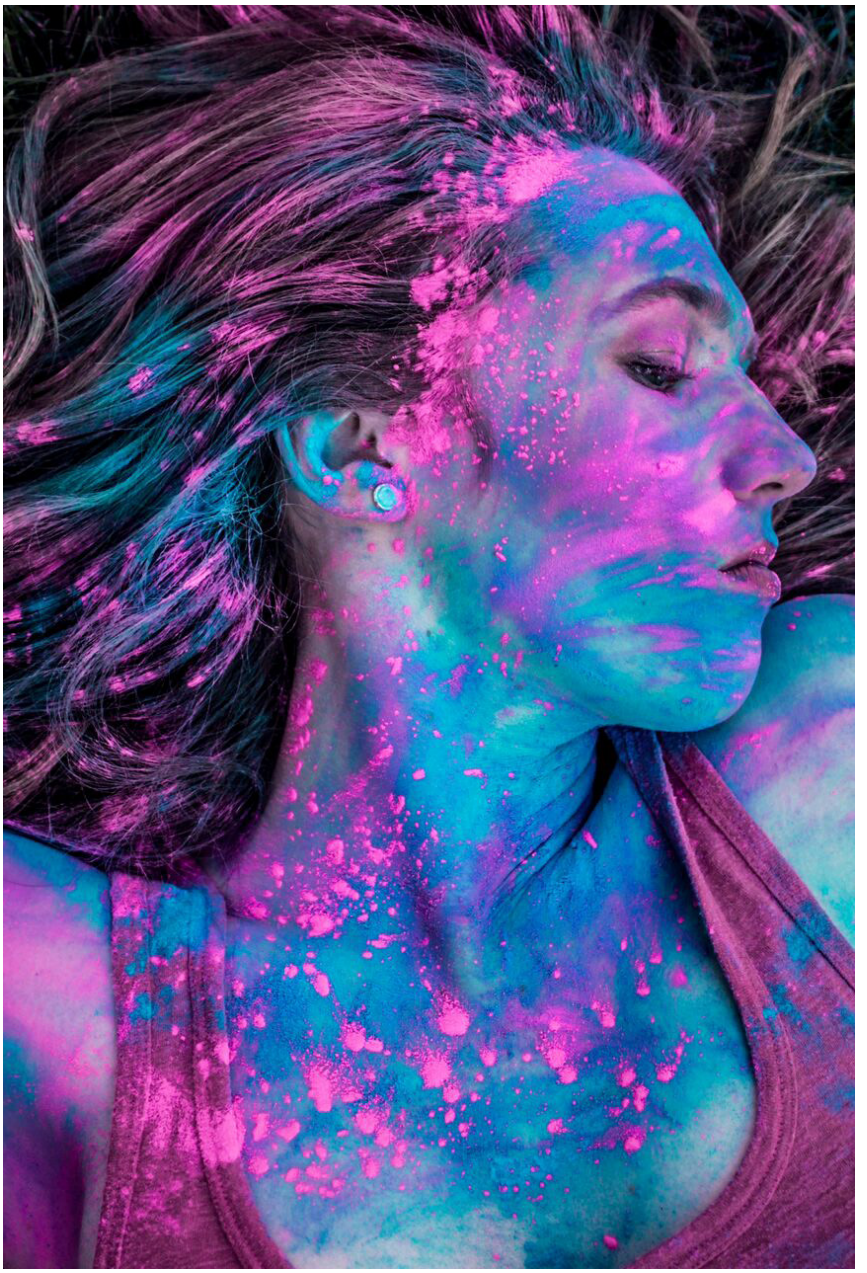
First, I asked myself whether I was married to a man who was detached from reality. Before I gave him a look I hoped would pierce his soul, I thought that dangling over the river from a rope ladder might have damaged my hearing. Then, with the precision of a surgeon, I prepared to dissect his statement.

"Could this have anything to do with the fact that you ventured off to The Garden when I warned you that we didn't have enough time allocated?"

"No!" he responded. "We were late because you decided to stay in bed most of the morning."

Janae Brown

Colored Crayons



Color Photography

Calliope Second Prize 2016 - ESL Poetry & Prose

Thao Thanh Trinh

My Mom

"The heart of a mother is larger than the ocean" – That's a line in the folk song my father used to sing for me. My mother is the most important person in my life. I admire mom because of her hard work, her wisdom, and her heart.

A day for my mom starts at 5 AM. She wakes up even earlier than the sun. Every morning, she boils the water, makes morning tea and prepares a bottle of iced tea for me to drink at school. She cleans the house every day before going to work. As principal of a small kindergarten, my mom always goes to work early and leaves last, to make sure all the work is done and lights and faucets are turned off. No matter how busy her day is, she makes fresh and good dinners for us every day. She says our happy faces when eating blow her tiredness away. In my country, dishwashers and vacuum cleaners are not common. Therefore, my mom has to do all the chores and laundry by herself. However, when my sisters and I were old enough to do house chores, she bought all the machines to help us. Because of all the hard work, my mom's feet are sore, her hair became silver, her skin wasn't cared for well and her hands are tough like a man's. However, those tough hands taught me the value of hard work and the happiness that comes afterwards.

When I was young, I believed that mom and dad were the most knowledgeable people. Mom could do almost everything. She knew eight different braid styles for my sisters' hair. She knew how to fix my tattered jeans and how to replace the buttons I lost. She taught my sisters to cook good food and she helped me with my homework. My mom was not only a chef, a tailor, a teacher of all subjects but also the most gentle nurse and the temporary mechanic–who replaced the broken light when dad wasn't home. Her knowledge wasn't natural. She learned from dad, from our neighbors and from many books she had bought. Mom also learned from her experiences how to tell if a person was good or bad, trustworthy or not. And that wise mom of mine is the one who taught us the joy of learning and helping people.

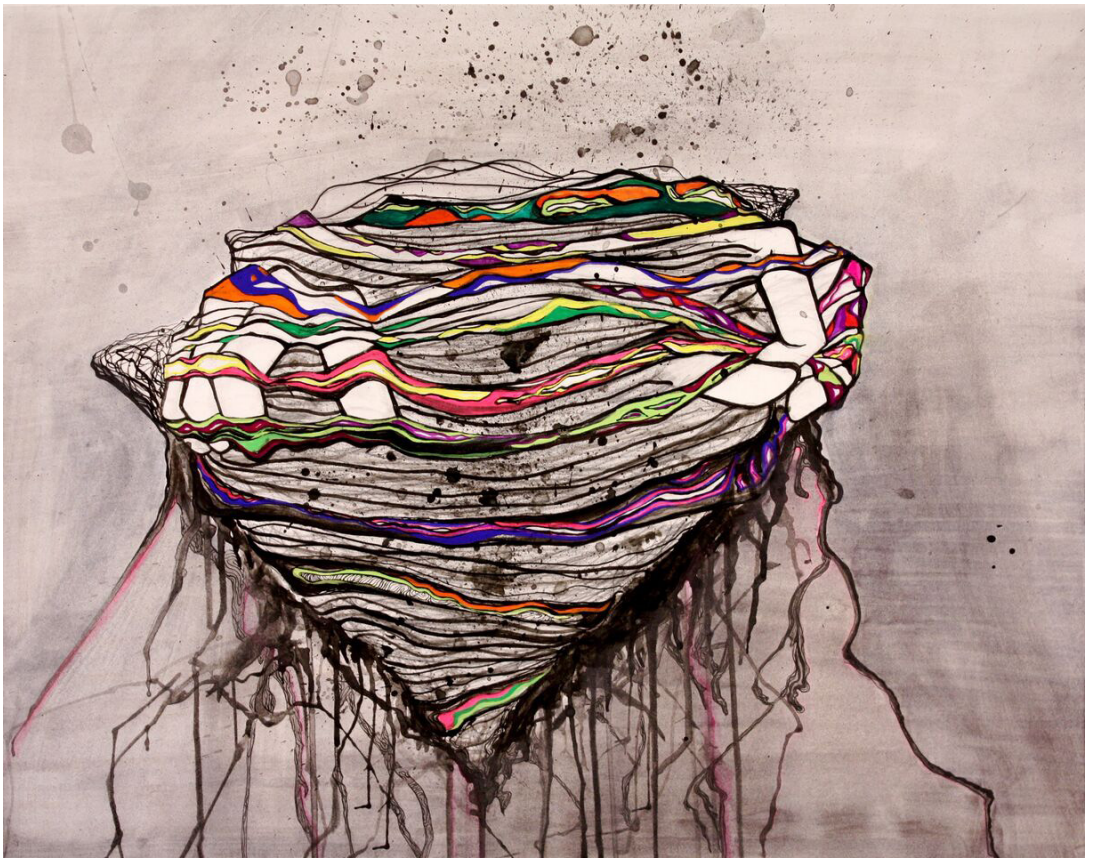
My mom has the largest heart in the world. Every night, she calls the students who were absent that day and talks with their parents to make sure they are okay or cheers up the kids who were sick. She buys clothes and food for her employees and pays for them when they skip work because of sickness. She never took a day off when she was sick but she did to take care of my dad when he was. She hates when my dad drinks alcohol but she changes his clothes, makes ginger tea for him, and wipes the floor that he vomits on every time he gets drunk. She bought us new clothes but made her own to save money. She scolded me for reading too many comic books but gave me extra money to buy them when she found out that I didn't have lunch at school to save money for books. My mom always eats so fast that it seems like she doesn't chew at all. Dad told us that it was because when we were toddlers, he watched us while mom was eating. She tried to eat faster so that she could feed us and let my dad have his meal. Mom once told me: "Treat people with sincerity and care, and you will receive more than you can see."

With her hard work, her wisdom and her heart, my mom lives her whole life with

sacrifices and love to teach us our most valuable lessons. Because she spent all of her time for us, mom didn't have time to take care of herself. She wasn't the most beautiful woman but I will grow up faster and make her the most happy mom ever. Thank you, mom.

Grace Chung

Beautiful Disaster



Indian Ink & Watercolor Paint

Calliope Second Prize 2016 - Fiction

Christopher Miller

A Party to Die For

He sat in the bathroom scrubbing at his arm in frustration, trying to remove the rather sloppy phallic image emblazoned on his arm in black marker. The light bounded of the white-washed walls practically burning his eyes. The noise wasn't helping either. The loud music echoed through the house and shouting punctuated the driving bass rhythms resulting in a throbbing pain in his forehead. He only blacked out for a second, but they pounced on him mercilessly. Jay threw the bar of soap on the ground in frustration and let out a sharp exhale. The drawing had faded a little, but that might just have been because his skin was burning red from the frivolous scrubbing. His hair was a matted, black mess that he combed his fingers through to get the long locks back into place. At least they didn't write on his face. He thought he'd kill someone if they messed up his makeup. It took him almost an hour to get that fine black outline from the eyeliner he stole out of his mother's purse. Jay sat on the edge of the bath tub for a moment to get his bearings as the room was still moving. A hint of nausea presented itself in the pit of his stomach, but it wasn't so bad yet because he was still a little buzzed.

A heavy banging sounded at the door and, subsequently, his head. He inhaled sharply and struggled towards the door while cradling his head in his hand.

"What!?" he shouted shooting a glare at the guy standing in the doorway.

"You done in there yet?" the man spat back.

Jay dropped his shoulder and shoved him out of the way proceeding down the narrow hallway which was small enough without all the people crowding it. Eventually he emerged in the living room. In all honesty, it was quite a pretty little space. It was painted light blue with a fancy white trim and all sorts of paintings and family photos of proud parents with happy children. The home belonged to Emilia Winter. She was probably out mingling with the guests and playing hostess. The girl was fairly new on the scene and didn't exactly understand what how to be "punk." Her parents were in the middle of a nasty divorce, or at least that's the rumor, and she had taken the opportunity to try her hand at being the stereotypical bad girl. Most of the punks just laughed at her and called her "Cupcake" because she was so soft and sweet. Jay thought it was fairly clever and would often chuckle about it in the right company but never in front of her. The horrible truth was that he had a thing for her. Jay had always had something of a crush on Emilia, but he was never brave enough to tell her. It was the only reason he was even at the party right now suffering the company of these inconsiderate jerks. She had changed so much over the years though. He thought back to the first day he saw her, the first day of kindergarten. She was small with a pink summer dress patterned with yellow flowers. Her blonde hair cascaded in a tight braid all the way down her back with a large pink bow sitting contently at the tail. That day was immortalized in a frame on the wall in front of him, but of course that was a very long time ago. Then, as if on cue, she entered the living room via the backdoor looking exhausted and in terribly desperate need of a drink.

Jay watched walk through the torrential mess of people in the room in something of a frantic ballet. She spun and waved and tip-toed past people with an obviously forced smile plastered on her face. Jay grabbed another beer and plopped down on the plushy white couch, hugging the armrest in an effort to avoid being sucked into the vortex created by the couple next to him on the verge of imploding with sheer lust. He sat there staring off into the distance searching for anything that wasn't a grotesque display of public affection but that was near impossible under these conditions.

Just then, there was a thud and the couch rocked slightly making Jay jump a little. He looked over thinking the couple next to him had annexed the other cushion to better accommodate their passion, but it was Emilia finally taking a much needed rest. Jay found himself taken aback, panicking that this girl he had watched from afar for so long was now right here with him.

"Hi." she said, flashing him a courteous yet clearly uncomfortable smile. Jay drew a blank and found himself letting out a long droning sound that could be best described as "uh." Inside he was screaming at himself; this was his chance and he was blowing it. Finally, he glanced at the unopened beer in his hand and silently tipped it in her direction in a humble offering. She gave a light giggle that eased his nerves and took the drink from him.

"Thank you. I really needed this," she said with a comforting smile. Emilia eased back into her seat and took a swig of the beer. She let out a heavy sigh and rubbed her eyes with her thumb and forefinger smudging her makeup a bit.

"It's been such a long evening and I don't think anyone here even knows me. They're just here for the alcohol," she said as she dropped her eyes and stared into the bottle. For a moment the fragile smile broke and he could swear a tear formed in her eye. It was in that moment that he felt he knew who she really was. The girl with the cropped white hair, nose piercing, black eyes, and alabaster skin was a careful façade. Underneath the spikes and angry eyes was the girl he knew that first day of school all those years ago. He wanted to hold her, just touch her skin and keep her close.

Jay was jarred from his trance when a sudden bang sounded down the hall. He could see that past the mass of people several officers were pushing their way through and herding kids out in packs. Jay had to do something. This was his chance to be the hero and all he had to do was stay cool. Unfortunately, cool was not in his nature. Jay grabbed her by the hand and jumped up off the couch, bolting through the double doors to the backyard. It was a lengthy field of turgid green grass edged in by waist high hedges and a few rows of radiant flowers. The pair rushed through the garden to the back fence where they halted for a moment. He grabbed her by the waist and gave her a boost to the top, and in a moment she disappeared into the darkness. Jay immediately followed suit, hopping over the fence in one, smooth motion. He landed a little awkwardly, but it was nothing too embarrassing.

Emilia lived in a large house a little farther out of town than most other, and as a result, there was a large stretch of forest behind it. The woods were pitch black and lonely so Emilia insisted they stay together which meant holding hands. Jay thought his heart would explode when she took his hand in hers. They were so smooth and nimble. The palms were somewhat sweaty, but at this point he couldn't tell if it was his sweat or hers. Either way, he was entirely

focused on her. They moved through the forest in case the cops decided to sweep around the perimeter of the house for lingering kids. All he cared about was finally being alone with her. It was not quite as he had always dreamed of, but he was happy all the same.

They stopped suddenly in a grove with a large oak tree in the middle of a ring of smaller trees. The spring brought a slight heat with it that evoked the smells of life. The clearing housed a field of tall grass that was green even in the pale light of the moon. Emilia dropped Jay's hand and moved through the grass to the oak tree. Jay stood at the mouth of the forest watching her skip through the field. She was bathed in the moonlight and her white hair bounced with each step, glowing with life. The grass swayed in the midnight breeze creating the illusion of a flowing dress clinging to her waist. Finally, Jay roused himself enough to follow her. She sat at the base of the tree in a nook, snuggled between two massive roots. When Jay approached, she moved over and motioned for him to join her. They sat there for a time without a word, just staring into the night sky.

She turned to face him and their eyes were locked into place. He eyes were green and brimming with life like the sea of grass that surrounded them. Their faces were merely inches apart and he could smell the barley from the beer on her breath. Jay closed his eyes and leaned in to kiss her.

"Whoa! Hold on!" she chuckled.

Jay drew back, his face ablaze with sheer embarrassment. He shot her an inquisitive look and she read it almost instantly.

"You're really nice and all, but I don't even know you. It's been a really stressful night and I'd rather not make it any worse by doing something I might regret later. I really hope we can be friends though," she said softly.

Her words were sweeter than honey but they stung with the wrath of an entire hive of bees. The smile remained and there was an air of pity in her eyes. Jay heard what she said, but he just did not understand. He could barely hear anything over the beating of his heart. It was tearing away at his chest in an effort to escape and forget her face entirely. A heavy lump formed in his throat and he could feel the tears running down his cheeks. She reached over and touched his knee, and shortly after, he took her hand in his. Slowly he began to squeeze. His grip grew tighter and tighter. She winced and tried to pull away, but he grabbed her and held her tight. The look of pity on Emilia's face was replaced entirely by fear almost instantly while Jay's face remained stone cold and focused. She wrenched her hand from his grasp and tried to run but tripped over a stone instead. Jay picked up the stone in his right hand and stood looming over her. She lay there wailing and pleading for her life, but Jay was not listening. He face remained emotionless and unchanged. He dropped to his knees on top of her and raised the stone his above his head. The moon was low on the horizon behind him drawing the shadow of his body long on the ground before him. He brought the stone down with a heavy hand, and for a moment, one could see sheer malice flicker across his face. The stone struck the ground hard and Emilia could feel the earth shake beside her. Jay slumped back and sat on his heels hanging his head and crying uncontrollably. He was chanting the words "I'm sorry" in between sobs as he cradled his head in his hands. Emilia sat up off the ground and took a deep breath, sobbing a little herself and rubbing the tears from her eyes. She saw

the pathetic state he was in and thought he must've felt a powerful affection for her to react in such a way. At this moment he was at his most vulnerable and she took pity on him. She struggled on to her knees and hobbled over and embraced him. For a little while he sat there sobbing with his head on her dust covered shoulder while she patted him on the back.

"I'm sorry," he sobbed once again.

"I know," she whispered. And with one swift motion she brought the large stone down on the back of his head. With a thud Jay slumped to the ground unconscious as blood began to pool behind him. She lifted up the rock and brought it down on him again, this time on his forehead. She continued to hit him again and again and again until her arm finally gave out. Blood sprayed all over the ground soaking in the dry dirt and up the roots of the oak tree. She sat back and rested looking down on him breathing heavily and cradling her right hand, tender from bruises using the rock. After a little while she crawled over the body and snuggled back into the nook between the roots watching the moon fall beyond the horizon and the warm pink sky herald the sun. She sat back and wrestled a little bow from her pocket, pink like the streak across the sky. It was a gift from her mother and a symbol of her happiness. Her mother promised her that as long as she held this bow, nothing bad could happen.

Ghadeer Alakeel

Colorful Festival

Color Photography

Thao Thanh Trinh

Daydreaming

Crayon

Calliope Third Prize 2016 - Nonfiction

Anastasiya Chebotarova

To Be or Not to Be?

None of my friends passed the driving test the first time, so I was pretty sure that my first time would just be good experience. During the test I joked because I was sure I would have to return.

"Good morning!" I said, "It's a nice day today, isn't it?"

"Yes" the examiner murmured sleepily.

Coming to the car, he asked, "Are you going to drive this big car?"

My heart fell down and I stammered, "I'll try."

Then with a serious voice, he added, "Ok. Turn on and turn off your flashers please."

I did it and was waiting for the next command, but he continued to write something on his paper.

He finally addressed to me with the following words: "Are you ready to drive?"

I was surprised because I was waiting for his order one minute ago and I replied with irony: "Are you ready to die?"

He looked at me and told, "It is not time yet."

I followed his instructions and turned to the left, to the right, and went straight. It lasted ten minutes and then the examiner told me, "Please parallel park near this shop to the right."

I responded "Yes," but in my mind, I thanked God that it was early Saturday morning and there were no cars.

My parking was terrible. In addition, when I saw that my examiner left the car with the ruler to measure the distance between the lines, I thought it was definitely the end of my exam.

He looked carefully and announced the verdict: "You are between the lines" and told me to continue to drive. I again followed his directions and notice that we were going to the DMV. Before the entrance, he asked me one more question, "Is it your first time taking the test?"

I nodded and remembering my awful parallel parking and with irony I asked, "Do you like me so much that you are ready to see me again next Saturday morning?"

He smiled and asked me to park between the cars.

"See you next time, right?" I whispered.

He laughed and uttered, "One time was enough. Go to the window number six to get your driving license."

Calliope Third Prize 2016 - ESL Poetry & Prose

Yue Chang

A Life Changing Decision

All roads lead to Rome. No matter which road you choose, there will be a unique view. In fact, not everyone is allowed to choose a road by themselves, especially in my country. One day last year was the first time that I made a choice by myself. I was very proud of my first choice. This experience would stay with me forever.

If you were born in China, I had to say, "you are lucky, but also you are unlucky." Most of Chinese children are not permitted to make a choice by themselves. Their parents will make it. Like most Chinese parents, my parents had arranged everything for me before I was even born. I was required to learn something which they thought was useful. They even chose hobbies for me, such as playing the piano and dancing. They never asked my opinion. When I was 5 years old, I was required to play the piano for two hours every day. It made me feel depressed, because it was not my hobby. It was theirs. When I was in college, my parents decided that they would send me to America for better education as soon as I graduated. I tried to persuade them that I could also have good education and life in China, but I failed. I knew this was my tragic life. I had never made any choices by myself, let alone making a decision on such an important thing. This situation lasted for almost 24 years until I went to the United States.

I came to America after I graduated from my college as my parents expected. When I got here, I realized it was a good opportunity to begin my new life, a new free life. It might be the good chance to unplug completely. I hoped I could get a fresh start on everything. However, my parents influenced me too much. As a result, I was afraid of making decisions by myself. At first, I was expected to choose a major which they wanted me to choose, as usual. They wanted me to choose the Arts Management as my major, but I am interested in finance. I hope I could be the manager of a business company. That was the first time that I decided to argue with them. After I had lots of argument with my parents, I finally got an opportunity to make my own decision. I felt very excited about my success. I also convinced them that I could choose my major and my future life by myself. I eventually chose Accounting as my major. I believed that this major had a broad developing prospect. However, I found that my choice brought me a lot of challenges after I felt happy in a transitory time.

Obviously, I had to deal with many problems with the new major. For instance, English was a difficult task for me, especially some professional vocabulary in my major. In addition, I did not have any academic background in accounting. I felt depressed and all of the homework made me feel helpless. I started to regret my choice. I thought maybe my parents were right. But after a period of time, I realized that I could not give up.

I should be responsible for my choice, so I made a study plan and found a tutor to help me. Through my unremitting efforts, I had a good performance in my first Accounting class. I felt very proud of my choice and achievements.

I realized everyone had the right to choose a road for themselves. No matter how hard the road was, you should insist on walking. You would always have an amazing and unique experience. Finally, you will be proud of making a choice by yourself.

Salomon Cordova

Reflection Rising

Acrylic Paint

Calliope Third Prize 2016 - Fiction

Alexander Tsapos

Tick Tock

And I remember as I was a child. All these playful innocent days, climbing up the trees, hiding behind the bushes, scaring the neighbor with the pig mask that I made from the barn. All these days that I woke up had breakfast, ate lunch and before I even knew it, I was already in bed sleeping with my two brothers and my little sister. My parents slept in a small room on the left side of the kitchen and the rest of us in the room to the right side. The four of us were sleeping on an old mattress that we found in the dumpster a few blocks away from our house. My father was so happy that day and I remember we all gathered up in front of the icon of the Virgin Mary and expressed our gratitude as if we found a plaque of gold. We used to collect many things from the streets.

One of my favorite days, was the day I found a hand watch in the market. It was around 7:00 A.M. when my father and I had to walk about seven miles in the morning to get supplies for the pastry shop my father owned. The German soldiers in my neighborhood were regular customers as they loved the coffee and fresh figs we served. We always had to be on time there to serve them on their break time. So we finally arrived and I asked my father if I could rest for a minute on the sidewalk.

I sat there and watched the people hastily moving back and forth. They were coming in and coming out with bags in their hands mumbling about politics, and I remember a German soldier looking at me as if I was guilty of a crime. But the way he was staring at me was as if he felt sorry for me, sorry that I had to be there at such an early time at such an early age.

I took my look away to make sure I wouldn't get into trouble. As I was moving my look away from the soldier, I noticed a black watch, a meter away from my left side. I looked up in the sky for a second and then I threw a quick glance at the soldier's location. I waited until somebody passed in front of him to block his vision and when the field was clear, I reached to it quickly and put it in my pocket. It was a good day. After all these years I still keep it into my old closet.

I was already 10 years old but I had the responsibilities of a grown man. Me, my father, and my oldest brother took care of the family. My little brother Emmanuel and my sister Hope weren't big enough to bring food on the table but they were small enough to maintain a calming aura at the tough times through their innocence.

I remember that time that I was walking towards my house after a long trip from the city of Korinthos to deliver rice, raisins and coffee. It was a long trip and took me and my brother a week to get there and another week to come back, as we were always travelling on foot. It was almost midnight and the streets were dark. We were exhausted and all we wanted was a hot soup and a soft place to lie down. We were only eight blocks away from our house and as we were walking we heard somebody screaming in German. And so we saw a dense bush and we hide behind it. There were three German soldiers and a young male on his knees begging for mercy. He was bleeding all around his face but the night guards didn't stop smacking him with their metal sticks. There were no excuses. According to the German

supremacy; no Greek civilian was allowed to be out of his house after 8:00 P.M. So he was breaking the German law as we were too. We were terrified but we knew how close we were to our home so we moved slowly towards the next tree and started running towards the house. When we finally arrived we opened the door and everybody was sleeping. We were trying to catch our breaths as our heart was beating so fast and our legs were stiffer than a solid rock from exhaustion.

It was really late and nobody knew when to expect us. There was a steaming pot on the stove and so we sat down to have some hot soup so we can catch our breaths after the long journey. While I was reaching a spoon from the sink it slipped of my hands and made a loud noise. Our house was like a small cabin and so the sound spread out into the walls. The door knob of my room gently twisted and behind the door a small shadow was hiding. It was my little sister. She recognized me and ran into my arms. The minute I felt her heart beat towards my chest, I exhaled deeply as if I released a demon that was haunting me for some time. She was adorable when something upset her. There was no other option other to just yield to her calming presence. I felt the warmth of my home through her peaceful and innocent look.

Another thing I remember was during this long trip to Korinthos was that two men of our own asked us to carry four packets of gunpowder which were going to be used against the Germans. But they were always alert of a new attack and on the borders of Athens they searched everyone that wanted to pass. I remember that they had a strict rule. For every 1 German soldier Greek rebels would kill, the Germans would kill 30 of them. But it was less likely to suspect two young boys of our age. I remember one of the rebels told us that this was a chance to prove our devotion to our country just like our ancestors and all the fighters of the past. It was a chance to stand our ground against the suppressors and repay the debts owed for our freedom.

And so I took two packs and my brother the other two and we put them in our sacks under the coffee to cover any smell. As we were walking towards the checkpoint a young soldier waved to us and yelled something in German. We were terrified as we thought that he knew our secret. Our hearts were beating so fast that it was getting difficult to breath. We knew all the horrible things they would do to us and that no mercy would be given regardless of age. We approached the guard and he asked with the little Greek he could speak what we were carrying in our sacks. My older brother told him we were only delivering some rice and coffee to a close by village. Another soldier shouted out a joke and he looked away for a moment and started laughing. He opened the top of our sacks and didn't find anything wrong, so he let us pass. We both knew the horrible things they would do to us if they found out but we had a feeling of satisfaction in us as we knew that we did something brave. It was one the most frightening moments.

But not as frightening as when we were passing through a small village on the seaside of Peloponnesus on our way to deliver a sack of figs and raisins. I still remember that day. We were walking with my brother carrying our loads in a summer day and talking about what we were going to become in the future. Dreaming and hoping for a better life. We would speak about how there was no justice in the world. Imaging all the goods and luxuries we would achieve if we survived the war.

As my brother was describing how his perfect wife would be, we heard gunshots firing from a far distance behind a hill. We approached as curiosity overwhelmed us and we saw a small village drowning into fire. There was blood on the pavement, burning dead bodies hanging out on the porches and the people were desperately screaming for help. It felt as if the devil was present through the rage and violence inflicted upon these innocent people. The German forces had lined up the males of the small village and they were getting ready to execute them, after they heard that rebels killed a couple of Germans in an ambush. Slaughtering, grief, and sorrow for their beloved ones. Lifeless bodies spread out the streets and everything had been surrendered into the flames. The horrifying odor of death was everywhere. The spirit of the village had surrendered into the hands of fear and terror. I will never forget that day. Up in the sky there was peace and a sense of symmetrical beauty; but below the colors of the daylight, there was chaos. A German soldier spotted us from a distance and started shooting with his automatic rifle. We jumped up and run faster than ever before. We thought this was the end. God was punishing us because we helped the Greek rebels. We ran and never looked back so after a solid mile we stopped as we were powerless to keep going. Nobody followed us they just fired as a warning. We lived to die another day. But I still have that horrifying image in my head. The image of death. I have kept it deep inside the shelves of my mind.

Every day was a struggle and we had to face the reality of death constantly. But somehow we managed to survive. I still can't comprehend how lucky we were.

As my father used to tell me when I was feeling desperate, "Death smiles at us all; all a man can do is smile back." That phrase was stuck in my head and probably kept me alive.

I always thought that life was the biggest mystery of all. A well-kept secret. My father would sarcastically say to me that life is not that complicated. You just get up, go to work, eat three meals, you take one good shit and you go back to bed. There is no mystery here. You just have to keep going and see where it gets you. Life is hard and then you die. That's what he used to tell me.

Every day was passing by faster than the wind moved through the continents. Faster that the time the water took to fill up the streams and cover up the oceans. Faster than the time a forest recovered from a deadly fire. But It was all just a dream. Every scene changed so fast that I forgot the previous one and as I was moving forward; desires, fears and ambitions just went by and faded slightly every day. Life after all just feels as short as the duration of a dream.

But now I realize that after all these tough and challenging days, after all the struggles and achievements, I was only getting closer to this bed. This white and lonely bed. A bed that I can only share with myself.

The clock is ticking. Around the bed my close ones hear the ticking and wait patiently. The meter read 86 and it fell down to 50.

Tick tock, tick tock, the clock is ticking. And just like every other dream or nightmare it always comes to an end. If it never ends you never wake up for the new beginning. I hear the ticking tick tock, tick tock. The meter reads 40. I can see the end of my path. Silently waiting. Slowly approaching. Every second counts. The clock is ticking and it's getting closer to its end. But now I know. I can finally see as I was blinded.

It was all just a ride and the ride went up and down, round and round. It had thrills and chills, and it's was very brightly colored, and it was very loud, and fun for a while. But just like every moment it always comes to an end. The circle must always be completed, and so it is. The unexpected virtue of the clock is always in motion. And just like every other dream and nightmare it always comes to an end.

Courtney Jessica Thompson

Lakeside Reflections

Acrylic Paint

Andrea Michelle Quintanilla

Audrey

Permanent Marker

Poetry

Courtney Jessica Thompson

Plucked in the Wild

Every rose
Needs its thorn
To prick the hands
By which it's torn
Up from the grounds
Where it still grows
Into the beauty
That it shows
To passing eyes
Whose only right
It satisfies
Through distant sight
But some who see
Insist on more
To meet the urge
That they lust for
And take upon
Themselves to take
Away the choice
That God did make
For all his roots
To remain still
Unless they break
At their own will
As they wilt
When they are drawn
Towards the guilt
That is put on
The rose that stood
Once proud and tall
Who's lost its edge
Before the Fall
And those who see
With passing eyes
See nothing more
Than a disguise

Of fertile color
In a barren vase
Whose beauty sees
Its final phase
As what it is
Is what it was
And what is left
Is all it does
And over time
In faster pace
It fades alone
And out of place
Away from where
It once was free
Where moral hands
Had let it be
The way that God
Himself intended
Whereby only his
The rose is mended.

Poetry

Soriya Eath

Human Suffering

Thrilled by the attention
Infamous and damned in eternal detention
With bloody hands responsible for the deaths
Murdering and taking innocent lives' breaths

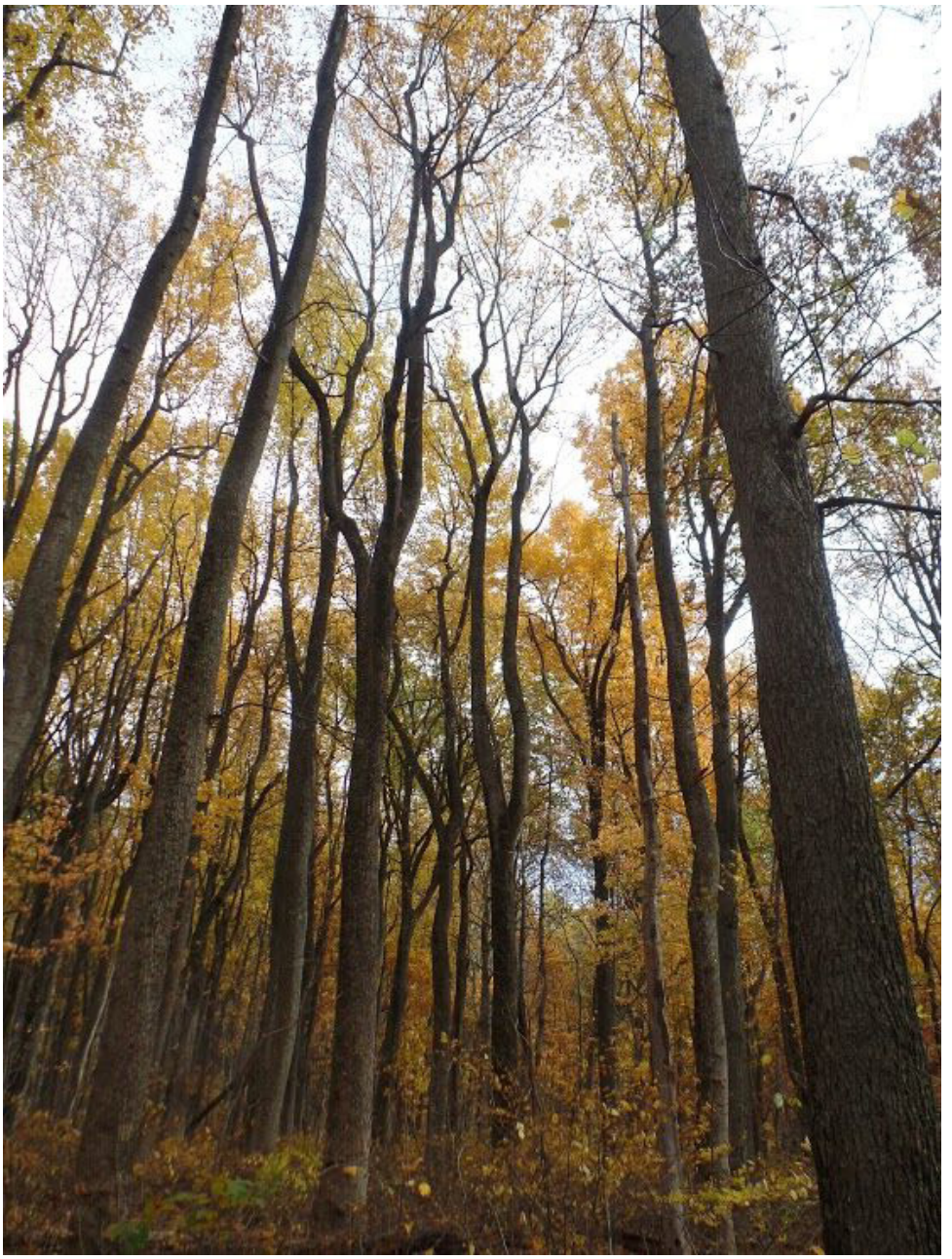
Shivers slither through their snake-like spine
Evil enters with no remorse
What laws of religion, is one to bind
When God is not there to enforce

Blood oozing down a fragile body
Killing seems to be just their hobby
Whimpers of weakness surrendering in tears
The war seems to be endless in years

Few think it's fate, but who is one to dictate
Immune by the news, only expressing opinions of our views
The sound of a cry should not be the last goodbye
Although there will always be strife, it defines the meaning of life

Mariana Jurado

Walking in the Forest



Color Photography

Fiction

Christopher Miller

The Right Thing

Autumn leaves danced about the sidewalk in time with the music of the whistling wind while I walked home from the store carrying Momma's groceries. The playful autumn wind brought in tidings of winter and that meant snow. I never much cared for winter because we didn't have a furnace but somehow that soft blanket of white makes everything better.

After walking about a block I turned a corner and noticed a small group of white boys. For an instant I made direct eye contact, which was already a grave mistake. I looked down to avoid their gaze and show my submission, but it was not enough for them. I crossed the street so as to avoid their wrath and all the while I heard faint whispers. I grew paranoid and began to walk faster. That's when I heard them. They began to shout obscenities at me.

"Hold up a minute. I got something for you to look at," one shouted at me.

I knew that if I complied I was in trouble, and if I didn't that I'd be in even more trouble. I stopped and turned around to look at the boys. It was exactly what they wanted me to do. When I turned around I was hit by a rock. It struck me above the lip just under the nose. It did some damage as I could feel my boiling blood flowing to my lips. Hatred welled up inside me. I wanted to answer their challenge by striking back. I knew I could take them. It was what would happen afterwards that frightened me. I knew that if I touched them I would die. The question now was whether or not it would be worth it.

What was I saying? How great was my own hubris that I actually considered a petty and belligerent victory to be worth death? These white boys were ignorant. They only repeated what they had been taught. They don't know any better, but it does not excuse them. Nevertheless, I forgive them and I feel sorry for them.

I turned again and this time I ran as the boys laughed and shouted at me. I had won. I did what they did not expect and they were desperate. But why do I still feel defeated?

Nonfiction

Courtney Jessica Thompson

Chalk Lines

Fumbling blindly around the dimmed corner of the closet, I skimmed over various furs and itchy knits in an anxious search of my new leather coat that the weather had finally agreed with. It was just under 50 degrees, and perfect time to show it off on a runway strut around the block. I tucked my embroidered jeans into the tops of my boots to ensure that they wouldn't get snagged and continued out of the house. With a secure tug, I yanked shut the aging door, preventing the sharp air from cutting through the cracks. The force thrust a heavy wind along my back and egged me towards the driveway. Before I reached the pavement, I passed a twisted lump of crumbling, purple speckled metal that had eroded in the rain. I stopped to find myself picking at the deteriorating paint, as I recognized the mass as my childhood bike. I stared for a moment, lightly spinning the wheels as the memories unwound from the spikes, contemplating just how many times those wheels had spun. Pasty chalk dust and the scent of sweaty rubber still permeated off of the handle bars. I found myself lost in memory, a one way road, and I quickly made a U-turn in my own head, back towards the right direction. The future was where I needed to be. There was no time for dead ends or detours of any kind, and the past was the last thing that was going to throw me off course.

Feeling confident, I continued down my steep slope of a driveway, heading along the edges of Marianna Court, my home. The leaves had slowly turned, gracefully camouflaged into the beauty of change that hovered in the tree tops. The scene was familiar in an obscure and unrecognizable way. It had been months since this scene had been more than just the backdrop to my house or the obscured image through a frosty window. I walked heavily as I gradually absorbed the atmosphere with each step, pacing as each one was colder and less familiar, as they reminded me just how long it had been since I last stepped in that exact space. The ground was frozen, unshaken, and it was strange to me how it could feel colder now than when I was barefooted as a child. I was no more than 50 feet up from the lawn, and the floors of what was once my world could feel like unexplored territory. I had walked by these grounds every day and not once did I think to look just to my right, and smile back at the world of my past. I shivered with guilt, shaking off the regrettable thought before it chilled me any deeper. Giving in to my curiosity for a second time, I instinctively traveled over to the old oak, and stood beside it uncomfortably. The swing that hung from the far branch looked suspiciously different, but I couldn't identify why. There was something uneasy about its stillness. I couldn't recall a time that I had ever seen that swing at rest without the subtle sway the vibrations of our laughter would leave behind, that fought against the gentle currents of a spring breeze, continuing to drag it back and forth. That old hunk of wood that now resembled no more than a weak sliver was used so frequently that it never had the chance to settle out, before one of us was back aboard.

I bent down to hug around the trunk of the tree, hoping that after so many years, my fingers would finally touch on the other side. I stretched as wide as physically possible, only to realize that it was even more difficult than I remembered. Was it even logical that the tree had aged at a more rapid rate than me? Or maybe I had just tried more persistently last time in the days when will always conquered such lassitude, and "physically possible" was much too large a phrase. Disappointed, I stepped back, and ducked under a branch that I had clearly remembered jumping to reach in years past. That reeled back the confidence that had escaped me, and I took a seat on the shadowed ground. The grass was a full green, coating the ground in thick sturdy locks that barely shivered in the wind. It had finally recovered from the erosion of constant tiny footsteps, gnawing at its roots with each stroke of the swing, leaving evidence of freedom and energy in its place. Now it seemed peaceful, untouched, but somehow I couldn't help but think that it had looked much better before.

I found myself drifting, slipping into days recalled, spent slowly on this lawn. Thoughts of freedom and imagination fumed out from my ears. I found it harder than I had expected to drift off into that mind of creation that was once so easily accessible. Something was missing, or something had changed. Had my brain gotten too big for my own head that I left no room for creation? I needed some kind of boost, some sort of forceful push to jolt those childhood wires back into useful action. I jumped to my feet and waddled to the swing with hesitation, as the blood quickly streamed back to my skull. Lightheaded, I straddled the rope, releasing my body weight onto its fragile support. Soon I tensed up again, to the sound of a subtle, but painful squeal that seeped from the top of the rope. I clearly wasn't the light load anymore.

"Sorry," I murmured under my breath as I looked up at the frayed, knotted rope, and continued to awkwardly adjust my position. I latched on to the indented hand grips, conveniently positioned just below my chest and squeezed tightly, my eyes pressed shut in preparation. I was hoping to absorb any debris of power the swing had held, to help me tap back into my memory. If only for a few hours I could drift into a day of the past. Maybe then I could steer myself back on track.

With one firm grasp and a tight lock of the knees, I stepped back and prepared to release my weight from under my feet, skeptically hoping to swing into an alternate existence. I took a deep breath of the dry, cold air and released it as I swung. With a single gust of wind, the temperature had dropped, and the air I exhaled was suspiciously warm. I halted the swing with my heels, grating them through loose soil beneath me. My body had slightly uplifted and the swing was instantly under less pressure. I could feel the rope relax into silence. Dazed, I quickly returned to my feet. I looked curiously around me, hoping to see some kind of organized image. In the distant scenery, where the treetops rippled along the immediate hillside, a faint, pale yellow figure bobbed with a steady rhythm. It gradually got larger as the image sharpened and the figure grew closer and closer. It took no more than a moment for me to identify with the face, as it became clearer with each step. The young girl slowly approached me. She was a balanced blend of crystal blue eyes, spontaneous freckles, and sun burnt cheeks that served as evidence to her youthful defiance to the sun. Her golden blonde hair

blew recklessly at its own will in ringlets of no particular order. She had a tempo in her step that I easily caught on to, as my memory picked up on the beat. She was loose and free, maintaining a firm grasp on the flimsy red bucket that swung at the base of her hip, simultaneously swaying with each lightweight step.

"Hey, Court!" A voice struck my distraction in the more delicate of ways. I admitted to myself that this was a little bit far stretched for what I had in mind, but I soon surrendered to the realistically warm atmosphere, and agreed to play along.

"Hey, Kir," I replied in an attempt to sound convinced. Nicknames had been one of the many ways we'd try to individualize ourselves, and re-carve who we were told we had to be. I found it suitable for this particular reunion.

"Want to go chalk?" she replied, using the word "chalk" as if it were the verb of some illuminating action. I almost ignored her question, and corrected her, but her eyes were so kind, yet dangerously threatening, preparing for me to reject her offer. If there was one thing I remembered about this little girl it was that your own personal health depended on not ever correcting her. She had a mind that never surrendered to an idea it didn't create, yet she was ironically and permissive at the same time.

"I don't know if I'm in the mood to get all dirty today, Kir." I paused for a moment, preparing for the persuasive speech of pleading and convincing that I guessed would follow. I squinted an anticipating eye in her direction for protection against her response, but her reaction through me. Kirsten burst into a sarcastic laugh of disbelief, and playfully drew her finger up and down in my direction.

"Very funny, Court. No one dresses like that if they're not planning to get dirty." I was puzzled by her hysterical grin, as I glanced down at my attire; a simple grey T-shirt, old, navy blue soccer shorts draped to the knees, and a pair of callused rough feet bare to the ground. Clearly I had forgotten how imagination always allowed you to be prepared for anything, and it was apparent now that something in the back of my subconscious must have wanted me to play. Attempting to hold back my shocked expression, I dribbled out a clumsy chuckle, followed by a cluster of unconvincing words.

"I was testing you of course!" Kirsten's face revealed relief, just under a thin layer of assumption that she had tried to portray.

"I knew that!" she insisted.

"Let's get to it then!" She swiftly merged to my side.

Her movements were as easy and swift as peanut butter, which swiped just as quickly through my mind as she moved closer. I could still smell the residue of a child's sloppy lunch drifting from her breath as she whistled along. I envied the youthful grace in her step, as I attempted to mimic her gestures. It was hopeless. There was an uneven glitch in our usual sync, and I wasn't sure if she had noticed yet. I began to dissect my surroundings, losing my focus into the infinite pavement blocks, aligned with the delicate beginnings of new trees, which were newly caped in freshly polished leaves, each with a glossy glare reflected the sun in a narrow path back into my eyes. I smiled, complimenting myself on my surprisingly vivid memory. I enjoyed this moment until I realized that lucid dreaming only ruins the experience. It was then that I decided to willingly give into this dream and just allow it take me. Just as that decision

settled, my eyes flickered to a very specific spot on the pavement, where I now found nothing at all. The pavement was smooth, perfect, in a way it hasn't appeared since 2001, specifically before September 11th. Glancing in that direction, I had expected to see five mounds of melted wax compacted into disfigured shapes, all facing each other in a tight, protective circle. But instead there was nothing, yet, so the ground served as a calendar that I hadn't expected to see; a devastating time mark. The absent mounts were the remains of an eight year ritual, where Kirsten and I, along with all our siblings would gather on the anniversary of that tragic day, and light candles in honor of those who were lost. Each of us with our own candle, that would burn slowly, targeting our fingers, as the wax dripped into our very own memorial on the ground. Between each year, the wax would wear down from the compression of cars, and footprints, and every year on the same day we'd rebuild on top of the erosion and repeat the same songs of respect. This was the only way we knew how to cope with the situation, while the rest of the world wept in front of TV screens to words that were too large for us to comprehend. Guilt struck my chest as I recalled the laughter we shared, blowing out each other's candles, and constructing smiley faces with the dripping wax. The joy in our young minds was much too dense for such a tragedy to puncture and deflate it. We meant no harm in our happiness towards the situation. We were merely subconsciously attempting to accommodate for the happiness the nation had lost. I flustered and shook, realizing how dazed I had become, but Kirsten's fickle mind hadn't noticed. Her face displayed the epitome of ignorance and bliss that we had shared on those days.

"What'cha starin' at the road for, Court?" She looked at me through a lens of innocence. In fear of shattering it, I replied,

"Nothing, Kir. Just thinking of how excited I am to chalk with you." My answer was simple, and stated in words she could understand, as simple as it needed to be. With that I aggressively took the chalk bucket from her hands and began to get hard at work in the same space on the pavement, creating what might be its last held picture.

"What do you want to draw today?" Although this was my imagination we were creating it in, I asked her this generously. She stiffened her shoulders in the way of a general and turned to face me boastfully.

"We're making a road," she demanded in a tone that left no room for argument. This was a game I remembered well. In years past, the two of us would waste hours and hours, sweating into the pavement as the chalk dust seeped into our pores and sweated back out again, working diligently on what we called "the road," a concept that in simpler terms meant hundreds of aimless lines that somehow eventually met up in the middle to create a road. It was a simulation of what we only knew through the tinted windows of a back seat. We'd go out of our way to draw street signs, lights, and even insist on giving each other speeding tickets. The most interesting part of the game was that when we'd meet in the middle, bikes all ready to go. We'd spend about 5 minutes of steady, obedient driving before we returned to the sporadic path our minds drove us on. Some would say it was a waste of our time, all those hours spent perfecting lines only to defy and smear them hours later, but I still believe this was what

what made the game. The fun didn't rise from strict motions around the court, but from the energy that came from the crossing of the lines we had created. The defiance of the rules that had no control over us was exhilarating, as we enjoyed the freedom it gave us, and the sense of a world without boundaries that existed only in the shallow years of childhood, the isolation of the court. It wouldn't be much longer until those simple rules of the road would be mandatory and a simple crash would mean much more than a skinned knee. The way I saw it, it would be ridiculous not to enjoy breaking them now, while nothing could harm us.

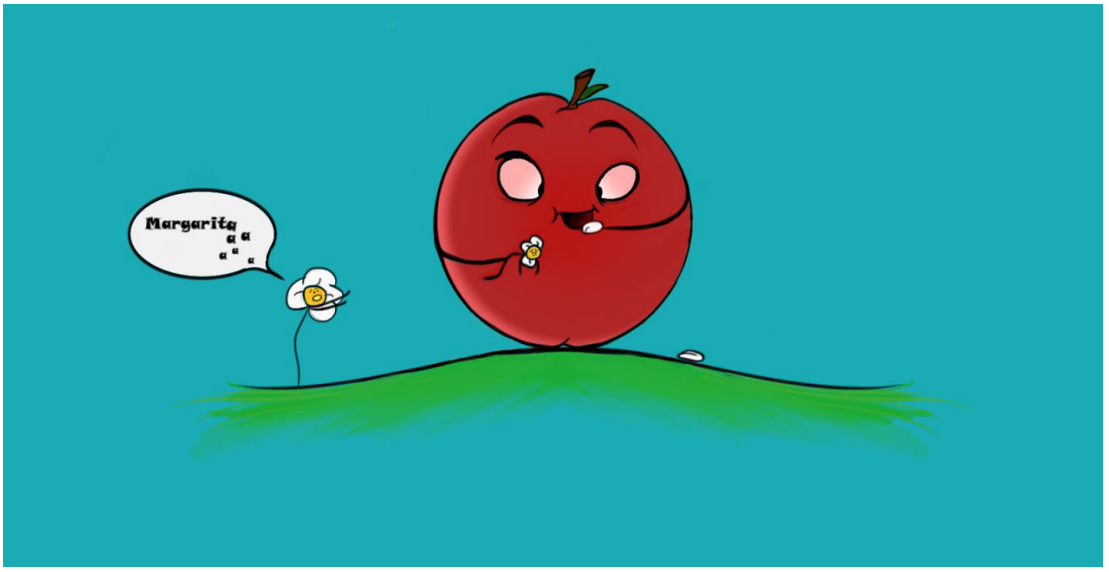
I didn't hesitate another second, even to answer her, before bolting back to the porch to get my bike. I ran so quickly that my torso failed to keep up with my legs and resulted in a very unstable landing that plunged my stomach into my bike. I wasn't used to generating so much energy. My chest throbbed. I stepped back to retrieve my breath, then lost it again, and quickly no longer minded. In front of me stood a brilliant, plum structure of firm, bleach-white grips and mirror perfect metal bars that glistened almost musically as they reflected my widened eyes. I was astonished. This was something I could definitely get used to. Both the bike and the ability I still carried to create it in my head. Without hesitation I straddled it proudly and rode up the street. Just as I was about to go straight down a "Do Not Enter" road that Kirsten had created, I was suddenly jolted to an uncomfortable stop, smearing tire rubber into the concrete. I was blinded as a beam of intruding light painfully flashed through the chalk dust, and the new clear vision allowed me to see that it was never really there. I was dazed in the light for another moment, until it pivoted to the left and proceeded down the street. As soon as the light released from my eyes, I could make a more precise evaluation of the car. I peered through the foggy windows at a long, thin face that was frozen still on the road. The women had hair slicked back into a tight, restricting bun that hid the highlights of her uniquely shaded strands. It took a moment for me to differentiate between reality and dream, and focus in on what I was actually looking at. It was Kirsten. I caught my breath, which was mysteriously cold, and diverted eye contact, but it was too late. She had seen me through her passenger window as she rolled by, sitting on my raggedy old bike 50 pounds over its limit, wearing suffocating jeans and a stiff, leather coat. For a moment nothing crossed my mind, though I was soon interrupted with the notion of how ridiculous I must have looked, as that idea of self-image gradually became relevant again. She gave me a smile of recognition, or maybe amusement, nodded firmly, and drove slowly on her way, onto the open road, the road of rules and restrictions. This was a place too quiet for laughter, too busy for fun, and too educated for its own good. This was the face of the Kirsten I knew today. The same cookie cutter shaped, society constructed mask that everyone wore. A face that always used sunscreen, with freckles too faded to make out under layers of dusty powder. It was not the same face I once knew, the face that didn't know of such gestures as the simple nod, too minuscule to represent such a large childhood spent together.

I looked around to notice it had gotten strangely dark, cold, and drafted with a depressing hue of grey around me. The petite, blissful child was nowhere to be seen, the chalk had completely uplifted from the ground, and the trees had sunk low and wilted,

as their glossy paint slowly dulled. I too sunk with a sigh, and heavily dragged my hunk of metal in the opposite direction, back towards the porch where it now belonged. I trotted over five elevated lumps that now existed beneath my feet, and tried desperately not to notice them as I held back the tears. As I dragged myself up the driveway, I watched the swing with its steady waltz, slowly drift into a deep sleep, as it rested over a bed of untouched grass.

Alexander Tsapos

Curious Apple or The Circle of Life



Computer Graphics

Poetry

Alexandra C. LaRouche

If Only She Knew

Repressed, pushed, pummeled, into life's segregating corners,
unable to escape a harsher reality; the emotionless narrative she calls life.
Locked inside the fictional nightmares that have become her home.
If only she knew.
Knew that one day these voices in her head would become something to live for--
not just another angry soul destined to cut her down.
Not just a reason to deem crazy the only option,
like your last pair of jeans.
No one can understand.
Self diagnosis spreading like a fashion choice,
leaking out of the fakers pores like an acidic bile filling the streets--drowning hopes and dreams.
You don't know what crazy is.
The lesser man, forced to submit to the undergoing tests of the doctor's analysis.
Prodded and stabbed with the ideal that normality is just a pop away.
Percocet, lithium, whatever condemning prescription forces itself down the sucker's dry throat,
leaving him gagging until the room spins in concentrated disgust.
The quicksand of sanity spiraling deeper down the drain,
leaking into limbo—and there you stay,
praying to your crutch, that brighter days are in store for you,
when you're already dead.
A misconception of your true definition, enveloping and consuming you,
as if they have the right to tell you who you are.
Scars of regret manifest themselves on your pallored skin,
hurt deep enough to hit bone, yet visible plainly to naked eye.
You're simply a conversation starter.
Watched like an animal, and documented by the strangers that claim to know,
claim to care, and convince you so yourself.
What a great first impression they can make, spitting up lies with the audacity they do.
Never have they known that need for self-mutilation.
A last resort, when the pills don't work.
A last resort, like you.
If only she knew
of the words they articulate behind her back, spreading rumors like the poison that's dashing through her veins.
Traumatized insurrections, leading her to believe friends actually exist.
But she's moving on to a better place, a safer place.

The depths of Hell perceived as a warmer haven than this torture she resides in.
There's beauty in the way she thinks,
the way she feels,
the way she talks.
Maybe one day she won't be just another child fed to the hands of depression.
She's lost and waiting for… who?
Holding out her hand for a clue.
They'll never know how crazy feels,
but if only she knew.

Jessica Meyers

Imprisoned Memories

Color Photography

Poetry

Shyreen Kamal

Night Rage

Existence of ghosts when they shouldn't be alive
Waiting for darkness to wander around
Whispering into your soul
"Bring me to life"
To unfold their dreadful riddles
Visiting people's hearts at night
Encouraging lives to dig the past
Instead of taking troubles to their grave
Creating rage amongst all
A freezing breeze upset the soul
Like a sharp crystal stabs the throat
Destroying your own and only voice
To fight for what was lost
Nothing from that can be seen
The truth is ghosts are just a dream
They are a metaphor of the past
The past that never dies
But remains as long as we're alive

Poetry

Noadia Saint-Louis

No More

"I love you" is what you say every day.
But in my mind I think there's no way.
For all the wrongs and torments you've caused me.
Now you down on your knees saying it's all about me.
"Forgive me" is what you asking me to do.
But in my heart I look there's none for you.
"Trust me" you say to convince me.
In your eyes I look I see nowhere that could be.
Regrets is what you showing you have now.
Too bad because nothing you say can again break me down.
"I'll change" is what you want me to believe.
Thank God I'm no longer naïve.
From all the tears and hurt I've endured.
I'm stronger now with the Lord that's for sure.
"I won't do it again" is what you said last.
But know that as I walk away you're now in my past.

Alexandra Nava Ruiz Tecco

Remains of a Beauty Parlor at Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum

Color Photography

Poetry

Dominique Cytryn

Patrick

Rough with cracked skin
Chipped nails with dirt under them
and long fingers to play your guitar
You pause and light a cigarette
and play with the flame of the lighter
Your mind like a lighthouse
guiding the lost souls to
enlightenment
And your smile as bright as
the evening star
Are you watching us?
"I am."

Nonfiction

Minh Phuong Tran

A Countryside, My Native Place in Vietnam

No matter how far I go, and how wonderful the place where I am living is, when I look back, there is only one place that I can feel most comfortable with my memories. That is the countryside where my hometown is. It is impressive to me because of three factors: familiar landscapes, kind people, and original customs.

First of all, my hometown was surrounded by the picturesque countryside, with peaceful landscapes to enjoy far away from a big city. Whenever I close my eyes, and I think about my countryside, I can enjoy the slower pace of life, closer to nature with large rice paddies. A paddy field was a flooded parcel of arable land used for growing semiaquatic rice. The fields were large enough for storks to fly with their wings outstretched, and looked like thousands of endless waves of green. In mid-autumn, some fields changed into yellow, and became a wonderful combination of colors. My hometown was located in the south of Vietnam, which had more rivers than other places. My childhood was also connected to rivers. The rivers were so beautiful because they were filled with sweet clear water; there were many trees along the riverbanks to make shade. Moreover, there were a lot of fish; it was good place to go fishing, and to enjoy the natural landscape. It was also a place for people to gather to go swimming every evening, and go camping under the shade.

Secondly, one of the main factors why I never forget that place was the people. Most of the people there were farmers. They had a very hard life, starting on the farm in early morning, and not returning home until evening. When I was a child, I went to the paddy fields with my grandpa; it was easy to see water buffalos were suited for the requirements of rice paddy farming, and a farmer went behind a buffalo on a sunny day with no modern machine. That was the specific picture in much Vietnamese poetry. The farmers' day occurred outside; they brought their meals, and then had meals with co-workers. There were no places to relax, so they could lie down, and take a nap under any big tree. Despite the difficulties, they were really friendly, and kind. Their simple life could say everything about them. Their life was not rich, but it was enough for them to have happiness. Even though they were poor, they were still optimistic, and willing to help each other, and smiles always appeared on their faces.

Thirdly, unique customs, especially festivals, made my hometown different from other places. Lunar New Year, or Tet, was considered the most important festival in Vietnam, when the whole family had time together to enjoy the three first days of the year, with many interesting customs. During Tet, everything was covered by red and yellow, which symbolized energy, happiness, and luck. I couldn't forget the time that my whole family gathered to cook banh tet which is a famous food made from sticky rice. It smelled a little salty like pork, and sweet like bananas; its taste was so delicious. During the time we were cooking banh tet, my family talked about themselves, about

what had happened in that year, and what they wished for the upcoming year. Besides that, everyone could join outdoor activities, and enjoy the social connection, such as mid-Autumn festival. It was the time when the moon was biggest in the year, so we celebrated by going to the pagodas, and praying for good luck. Children went out with colorful lanterns that they were holding in their hands, and sang a song to celebrate the Mid-Autumn festival. For older people, they sat at the front yard, drank hot tea, chatted together, and ate moon cakes on a peaceful evening. The moon cakes had a round shape, and looked like a full moon.

In conclusion, each of us has our own important places to go, and to live. However, sometimes somebody has to leave her or his country because of life. Living in a new place does not mean forgetting the image of the place I was born. I still keep my own stories about the sweet home with familiar landscapes, kind people, and original customs in my mind. It was the place that I call "Home."

Fiction

Jessica Meyers

Secrets of Stardust

I have to use a powerful microscope in order to see the miniature beings inside of U28288, but I still find them intriguing. It's astounding how putting certain elements together with the Dark Acceleration Oxidizer gas, or as we call it, the DAO, can in a relativity short amount of time form intelligent creatures. There are so many of them, all looking very different from each other. Yet whose evolution and essence is basically the same.

Some of the creatures have even developed technology and began exploring their universe. Most of them are still considered savages, but all of them seem to be evolving to the same point. Some of these creatures, the ones whose galaxies are the oldest, have even started to dabble in creating universes! When I saw this I was so excited! I ran to Enyeto and told him of my new discovery. His response to this was, "Kwatee, those poor saps don't realize that their own universe is our tiny invention. I take pity on them if they ever discover what lies beyond the bubble of their universe and see us towering over them. They will then realize they are but microbes to us. They have developed philosophy, science, and religion, but imagine what depression must follow if they find out that we are their gods! It's just as well that we release the DAO from their universe before they realize this."

Enyeto and I were among the first cosmology research scientists at Contrivance Corporation. We were to explore the elements that generate life in our universe. When we found out that we could start putting these elements together with the DAO to make our own "test tube" universe, we did just that. Since then I have witnessed thousands of universes created. It never ceases to amaze me when the gases start to swirl, making explosions and creating galaxies. It's fascinating how the small membrane we release the elements into can withstand such an explosion. When empty it looks like a small balloon, but as we release the elements into the membrane it instantly expands considerably if the explosions occurs. Depending on the elements we put together, the membrane's expansion rate is fast or slow. It can only expand so far though before it bursts. Most of the time the expansion stops and the galaxies begin to collapse. We've only had 42 universes, all of which had yet to develop life, expand to the maximum point, at which we have to release 10% of the DAO.

U28288 has begun to reach the maximum point with no sign of slowing. In fact, it seems as if it's getting faster! Today is the day we will let out the 10%. Sadly, this will cause the collision of galaxies and in turn kill the majority of the life in the universe. The thought of all those beautiful creatures dying depresses me beyond belief. These are my thoughts as I head to the Factory Laboratory where we store all the universes.

Every time I enter the Factory I'm awestruck. Row after row of universes line the massive factory, all of them unique from each other. I see Enyeto who doesn't seem affected by the expected loss of so many lives in the test tube universe. Most of the team

is here to witness the release of the 10%. I stay for the preparation.

As they begin to release the 10%. I decide that I can't endure to watch this massacre any longer. I turn so see Enyeto who is staring intently at U28288. I tell him I'll see him in the lab, and depart. However, before I reach the factory door I hear a massive explosion. With my ears ringing, I quickly turn to see the membrane has burst! A wave of nausea surges through me caused from terror I feel. Adahy, who had been operating the pipes, had instantly been set aflame. Her tentacle breaks off in burnt pieces as the fire engulfs her. Enyeto is rolling on the silvery steel factory floor, also engulfed in flames. I see the pain on his face as the fire surrounds his body, and his mouth is open as if he were furiously screaming from the pain, but I hear no sound. It's as if a numbing silence has encased me, separating me from my panic stricken colleagues. Everything seems to be moving in slow motion now. I'm frozen in fear. I want to help them desperately, but my feet don't seem to move. I look at my feet as though they were foreign objects that don't really belong to me, and for the first time I realize that I too am in flames. I stand staring at my feet in amazement that I feel no pain, and I see no need to extinguish the fire.

It is while I'm looking at my once pure white feet that are now blackened and immersed in flames, that I hear a WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH. I look up, curious as to what has invaded my beautiful bubble of silence. Flashes of light and swirling gasses of all different colors surround the factory. Each membrane, hundreds and hundreds of universes, are exploding with a WOOSH.

I realize that I'm oddly calm. I'm not afraid. I am afraid of nothing. I look back down to see my feet, and find I am…nothing. I have no body. Where my feet once stood in flames, now lies only ash. Looking around me I observe that I'm alone. My colleagues lie in ashes 20 feet from me. WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH. The sound continues. This sound, I now realize is much more beautiful than the silence, and it seems to be my only companion.

The remains of my colleagues are swept up by the multitude of colors from the exploding universes. Their ashes begin to swirl with the colors. The universes swirl around me, through me, in me. WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH. My only companion whispers to me. A beautifully devastating secret meant only for me.

Everything is rushing towards me now. The gray factory ceiling is tumbling down and the silver floor is crumbling. It seems as if the entire building is flying towards me. The entire town, the entire world, the entire universe is rushing towards me, rushing into me! Who am I? … Asherah? Who am I? … Marduk? ... Who am I!?… Ra? … I don't remember. I don't remember! All I know is my beautiful companion, WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH.

A final large, WOOOSSHH fills my core… silence. Panic-stricken enormous blue beings surround me. They have two legs but six arms! I then realize I'm in a gigantic lab of some sort. I recall Enyeto's words: "Those poor saps don't realize that their own universe is our tiny invention. I take pity on them if they ever discover what lies beyond the bubble of their universe and see us towering over them." I wonder what Enyeto would think if he were here to discover our universe is but a tiny invention.

The WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH begins again. I witness the terrible destruction of these enormous beings as they, like my colleagues, are engulfed in flames from the exploding universes they've created. As their ashes swirl in the beautiful colored gas, this universe also rushes into me. Why am I witnessing this? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I!?... Odin? Vishnu? Zeus? … I don't remember. I don't remember!

It happens again and again, over and over. I lose count of how many times I witness this endless cosmic dance of fiery destruction. Countless creators and innumerable universes, they all go up in flames and swirl with the colors. They swirl in me. I'm beginning to feel like I've been thrown so far down the rabbit hole I'll never escape. WOOSH-WOOSH-WOOSH, my beautiful companion continues whispering a dreadful secret I once knew but forced myself to forget. WOOSH-WOOSH… Shiva. WOOSH-WOOSH… Inti. WOOSH-WOOSH… Thoth. WOOSH-WOOSH… Anu. WOOSH-WOOSH…Yahweh. WOOSH-WOOSH… Brahman. WOOSH-WOOSH… Kwatee, Kwatee, KWATEE!!! … Silence…

It's incredibly dark and I'm alone. My beautiful companion has ceased to whisper my devastating secret. I'm no longer confused as to who I am. I now know. I am Kwatee… I am Ra. I am Yahweh. I am Shiva, and Zeus, Asherah, Inti, Thoth, Anu, Vishnu, Odin, Marduk, Brahman. I am all and none. I am… you. And I am all alone, dreadfully alone. The silence, the darkness, the loneliness, that's why I tossed myself down the rabbit hole with no memory. To drown out the loneliness I imagined a lie so proficiently that even you believed you lived and breathed. Which in a way I guess you do… You live within me, within my imagination… Does that make you any less real?

Luis Antonio Navas-Reyes

Empty Gumball Machine

Acrylic Painting

Poetry

Courtney Jessica Thompson

Pieces

The world is a puzzle, to which we're the pieces,
That can't be completed if one piece releases.
No matter the shape, size big or small,
Each piece alone makes no sense at all.

Much like a bird that's lost from a flock,
Or one missing gear that stops a whole clock.
It takes several links to make up a chain
And there can't be a beach with only one grain.

You can't start a fire with only one stick,
Or assemble a wall with only one brick.
A slender rope is likely to shred
If it doesn't consist of more than one thread.
Decisions are based off multiple votes
And music is made with a sequence of notes.

Every part pertains to the whole,
That work as a team for a mutual goal.
It's not the steps but the combination,
Like stars, we together form life's constellation.

Poetry

Anastasiya Chebotarova

Silence

Silence is like the shining stars
Which you can see, but cannot touch.
Because of them you can dream
And run away from real life
To the world where everything is quiet.

Silence is the singing of the birds
That you can hear in the park.
In spite of the terrible city noise,
The sound of nature speaks softly and quiet.

Silence is the conversation of leaves
When they change colors and
Gently whisper "hush, hush" to each other
Then smoothly and soundlessly fall to the ground.

The silence is always like the shining stars
You can enjoy them only in nighttime
Because with the sunrise--they vanish from the sky.
Like the silence that can be interrupted by the cell phone's ring.
As if telling you "Welcome to the reality, welcome to the real world."

Nonfiction

Mikael Hafeez Rehman

Arrangement in Art & Writing

Ever wonder why starting on the 3rd iteration of a series leaves you confused? Well you shouldn't because that is an absolutely ridiculous idea. Have you no class?! It should be start to finish, if you're a sane person. Yeah, so doing something like starting Game of Thrones from some random episode in season four is insanity! Sorry, I'm getting side tracked. Arrangement is found in anything trying to convey a message. Artists make concept albums; in my papers transition sentences help me give a message over a number of paragraphs, and the greatest stories of all time seem to be put in a specific way to help ideas seamlessly flow together to make something of legendary status. Arrangement is an art, and in that same stroke that makes all it involved in a form of art. So before you ask, yes, writing is an art and like Bob Ross let me show you how to make a masterpiece.

Needless to say, I have little personal experience on the subject. I've no fancy degrees or awards from prestigious organizations. If we were to put things in terms of movie clichés, "I am just a humble small town southern lawyer doing what I can to make my community better" (The Wise Musings of M. Rehman). We should talk about how important transition sentences are. I mean look at how smooth I went from the beginning to now. Transition sentences are what keeps your paper from looking like an overly thought out bullet point list. Switching from point to point can be a turnoff to readers. For example, an academic paper needs to feel like an informative dialog otherwise it's just like a bunch of notes that the author compiled, both boring and visual gibberish that only people in the respective field might understand. The two commonly used transition sentence structures are the use of transition words like but, additionally, I, moreover, again, as, etc. and the other method would be to review and preview. You're essentially repeating the previous paragraph(s) and talking about what you'll touch on next. A thesis for every paragraph, some might say.

Now I know you might be thinking that arrangement doesn't apply to anything but writing, even though I did mention other things earlier, musicians, as well as other artists, use it all the time. The placement of words, the drops, what sound goes first and last, even what the song list should look like. Artists like Kendrick Lamar, The Black Keys, and Band of Horses are among my favorite and they use this arrangement in their concept albums. For example, the album Brothers by The Black Keys reads like the life of a man who thought he found the one and his progress of getting past it all or in the first album of Band of Horses where the song, "Monsters" is put after the song, "I Go to the Barn Because I Like The" (more than just a coincidence if you listen to the substance of the two songs. Please, I'm not crazy) or how Kendrick Lamar's albums have a central theme. Have a look at the album good kid, m.A.A.d city. The album is littered with interludes of his family, and each one respectively works with the song it's

featured in. Of course the same applies for any other art. Some objects have specific placement to show the artist's true intentions, the phrase "a picture's worth a thousand words" comes to mind because you should look at art as if it were a paper in the language of that art form.

Great stories have been told in many languages and art forms. The Greeks used sculptures, the Romans documented historical events on scrolls and such in Latin, and even today poets and rappers show it in their works. There is a reason that certain parts of a sculpture are put near the other, that snake strangling that guy and his children is a story about a man who got strangled by a snake with his children. That's some great storytelling, however if the snake were to be next to a bunch of dead people we might think the snake is venomous and bit them all, so arrangement of the objects/ideas is a big part of storytelling. In cases of historical documents, Rome had its biases, and like General Shepherd said in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2, "History is written by the victor" (Shepherd). I'm certain that the wording in some pieces favor the Romans more, maybe a defeat was made to sound not as costly as it truly was, or the word "savages" was thrown around more frequently when talking about the enemies of Rome. Perhaps history was written in a way to promote patriotism or give some sort of superiority to the Roman people. Much like today's history books in, let's say, Texas, where it references the slave trade and calls the Africans brought to the Americas "worker." It certainly shows that in historical fiction TV shows, like Spartacus (which is a great show, lots of hot naked babes) where those portraying the Romans would bastardize the truth and make every action done by the Romans sound heroic. In fact looking back in the history of art, many civilizations used techniques to convey a patriotic message for their culture and society. Critics of such action, from now to the past, have used other forms of art and have hidden the true meanings in cryptic ways where they won't directly touch on the matter but compare. Poetry and music are among those and it allows for a certain freedom where people may express a view hidden in analogies, metaphors, imagery, and much more. In recent years rap has become a fusion of poetry and music, and often enough rappers will touch on the criticisms they have of the government or of people and their actions. The general structure of poetry and rap is a review and preview type style where every line touches on the previous while also being the substance of the work. To better understand that, when you look at poetry or rap it's generally in a single line format. Each line adds to the one above but also sets the stage for the upcoming line. For example, take a look at how Nicki Minaj sets up a punchline for duct tape in her song Only, "If I did I menage with 'em and let 'em eat my ass like a cupcake/My man full, he just ate, I don't duck nobody but tape/Yeah, that was a set up for a punchline on duct tape" (Minaj). Great setup, Nicki. Regardless of the ridiculous punchline, the way the rap was arranged, up to that point, was deliberate. Poetry and rap generally revolve around a specific feeling or theme the artist wants to touch on. When I start a poem, I usually have a word or a line struck in my head that I feel absolutely needs to go into the poem. I work with that topic/phrase/word, arranging every line to serve the purpose of delivering all the emotions and words I feel about it. The idea behind it is to paraphrase a paragraph in every line. To help you accomplish that task imagery,

metaphors, and other writing conventions exist. Think abstract. Poems and raps are arranged to appeal to an audience that the author hopes to pull in and spread. Write to convey a message you'd like to broadcast to the world.

However there are a variety of methods to arrange other works to get a similar result as you would with a poem or a rap. I've found that best method for me (some assembly required) to writing a paper is to pick my topic and make my point with several main ideas and then pull my ideas together with some transition sentences, chalk full of great zingers and references. Look at the killer Call of Duty quote I dropped in the paragraph above. Pull from what you personally relate to. Often enough the first idea that pops in your head isn't a bad one. Use something that can relate to the topic at hand and your audience. That seems to be the strongest way to engage my audience. My desired audience should relate to me in a personal way. Should I have a say in the matter, my topic will always be something I feel passionate about and the audience will be people I feel will best be informed by my writing. If you're struggling to make your work make sense and convey your message, it's worth it to have a look at your favorite artist and see the way they present their work. Odds are your work is influenced in some way by the artists you most enjoy and maybe their flow might help fix yours, and suddenly you're the next Ernest Hemingway.

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Diep Ngoc Nguyen Luong

Christmas Night

Computer Graphics with Sketchbook

Poetry

Jessica Briggs

Sister

Today is your birthday.
And for the first time ever,
I don't know what to say.

We have a past.

We used to live on the same floor,
And I would knock on your door.

Knocking knocking,
You would answer.

I don't hear you at the door.
I don't hear you anymore.

How is the weather where you are?

The sky drops here.

Tears with an absent salt,
Grinding everything to a core.

I still love you.

Fiction

Justin Rule

The Old Neighborhood

The old neighborhood was nearly unrecognizable. What used to be a lively tenement block had been taken over by something new. The reds and greys of that warn stretch of city had been corrupted by deep greens and troubling blues. The glow of streetlights and soda machines had new competition in the form of bioluminescence. Algae, anemone, even slow moving stinging flies, there was sickly light emanating from all of it. It was as if a coral reef had drunken dangerous sex with some madman's idea of a concrete jungle. A rabble of rabbit sized street crabs gather up detritus, gathering up garbage and foliage both in order to better blend into their new and troubling surroundings.

Everything had an uncanny way of floating. Stalks of vegetation very much like seaweed hung in the air, moving through it as if surrounded by water. Spores drifted down like snowflakes, covering everything, corrupting everything. There were no dogs, no cats, no vermin, only the new, crustationy organisms that lurched on the ground, or propelled themselves through the air like skittish lobsters before landing softly again on roofs and stoops and balconies of terrified families.

People hid behind their locked doors, using whatever they could to bar the outside air, filthy with the stench of biological decay. Apartments were rotting, from the outside in. There was no longer separation. Families helped families, black, white, there was no hesitation. Everyone knew that this new outside perversion was the real enemy, so the only people discriminated against were the green ones.

You could see them shambling through the tall sea weeds, breathing out and spreading bioluminescent spores from the fungus growing in their lungs. After a few weeks they all started to look the same, bulbous bodies, their thin limbs sprouting chitinous plates from toxic green boils on their skin, coating their rags in puss, feeding the algae and corals growing on their backs. They were reborn into something that could survive in this new climate, something primal glowed from behind their sunken pink eyes. Looking at them care for their young, you could almost see the humans they once were.

Poetry

Olivia Lynn

What I Live For

What is it that gets us up in the morning?
What is that mysterious thing that lifts us out of the warmth, safety, and comfort of our beds;
Leaving behind the wondrous lands of our dreams and coming back to the reality of bills and work and life?
Is it coffee?
Your husband?
Kids?
That Saturday night out with a friend?
Maybe it's your job or hobbies.
That book or TV show you have to know the ending to?
Or maybe you're like me.
Wincing, writhing, and whining,
Struggling, stuck inside your own head.
Screaming, hoping, praying you don't have to leave bed, don't have to wake up, don't have to do anything ever again.
And that feeling takes hold.
It controls everything, every action you will ever take, every thought,
Until you feel like you've lost control.
20 mgs of Prozac.
And forgetting to take those pills ruins me.
Locking myself in the bathroom because I just can't stand the thought of facing people, even people I like, knowing I can't control the tears, the sadness, and knowing I can't explain it.
Knowing, yet hoping and praying, and pleading to a god I don't believe in, will never believe in, that I'm not secretly hated, that the people I love and hold dear to me aren't planning my demise.
Looking in the mirror and hating what I see, every curve, every flaw, every hair I hate.
And I pull out my hair because I just can't help myself.
But, every day, I get out of bed.
I come to school.
And I live.
There are many things to live for.
One of those things is you.

Janae Brown

And So She Played

Photography

Salomon Cordova

Oswold

Permanent Marker

Poetry

Juan Sabino Ngundia Nchama

What is Love?

Love is what I feel when she is in front of me.
That feeling that makes my heart beat faster than usual.
Love is what I feel when I am overseas, and my phone rings and it is her.
When I am sick, I wake up in the middle of the night, and there she is,
just staring at me and making sure I am fine

Love is when her voice is the last sound I hear before I go to bed,
and the first sound I hear when I wake up.
Either when she is telling me good night,
or when she is yelling at me to wake up to go to school.
When she changes my mood in a second from sadness to happiness
and vice-versa

I could write thousands of papers explaining what is love,
Sometimes so simple and easy to explain,
and sometimes complicated and even impossible
Sometimes it is pain, oh lord! that sweet pain like agony.
The agony that ends only when she tells you the three magic words, eight letters.

Love is a female I can say.
Because there is nothing more beautiful than a woman,
not even the beauty of a rose growing during spring after a winter season.
My mother is a female, and she is unconditional.
She loves me. Either I am the best man in the world, or the worst ever

Love is my mother, because she doesn't need reasons to love me,
she just loves me, and her love will always be true.
A mother's love is not corrupted, because it's priceless.
Mothers are love, because they only live for their children.
And for me, that is love. Mothers are love.

Calliope 2016 Contributors

Ghadeer Alakeel is a graphic design student who likes to take photos for inspiration.

Jessica Briggs likes to journal every day. She's captivated by the stories around her, and this year decided to major in Global Affairs after being moved by the Syrian refugee crisis.

Janae Brown is in her second year at NOVA and plans on transferring to James Madison University this fall. Janae began her photography journey at just eight years old and then opened her own business, Jelli Bee Photography, at age fourteen. When she isn't clicking away on her camera she's most likely day dreaming about Australia, editing YouTube videos, volunteering, or petting her strangely fluffy cat.

Anastasiya Chebotarova works as a teacher of Ukrainian and Russian languages. She is currently studying English in the Workforce Development Department.

Serah Choi is an international student at Northern Virginia Community College. Her piece "What Makes You Live Your Life" is about the important points in your life, water, and fresh air. She decided to use her grandmother as a subject for her artwork. She needs music, travel, and family to live her life. She wants people to realize what is most important in their lives.

Grace Chung's artwork is a representation of going through a hard time in her life. She had huge dreams to succeed, but had so many personal issues holding her back. She was her own worst enemy. But the process of it was beautiful, because it made her appreciate the struggle and as a result it made her a lot stronger and made her love herself a lot more.

Salomon Cordova is a 25-year-old armed forces veteran who has been drawing on and off since young but has recently started to branch out into other mediums.

Dominique Cytryn is a 24-year-old Psychology major with a focus in clinical therapy. She wishes to receive her MD in clinical therapy and a master's certificate in art therapy to help autistic children, teens, and adults.

Soriya Eath is in her last year at NOVA and will be transferring to George Mason University in the fall to continue her studies in Social Work. Soriya finds importance in raising awareness of current world problems and environmental issues. Additionally, she loves singing, reading, and doing improv comedy.

Shyreen Kamal is a college student pursuing a bachelor degree in forensic science. From a very early age, writing has been her passion. Becoming a creative writer is a dream that she holds dear to her heart. Besides, mystery has always fascinated her and inflamed her imagination. The variety and the depth of her past experiences, have shaped her style. Spreading her vision through published words, motivates her to be a source of inspiration to others.

Calliope 2016 Contributors

Jason Lee enjoys playing piano in the CM building at night and likes drawing. He plans to go to medical school to be a psychiatrist.

Olivia Lynn is an aspiring writer, whether it be journalism, creative writing, or other forms. She enjoys the freedom writing gives and is currently at NOVA determined to improve and gain a job that lets her do what she loves.

Jessica Meyers is a freelance photographer, but she is studying science at NVCC. She plans on continuing her education to obtain a master degree in Bio-Neurology. She is fascinated with how the brain works and also has a passion for reading, writing, and creating art.

Christopher Miller loves to draw. Unfortunately, he's not very good at it. So he writes instead. He is 20 years old and tends to write along the lines of fatal attractions because he loves the intensity that two people can feel without really knowing each other. Also, he's bad at endings.

Diep Nguyen is an international student from Vietnam.

Luis Antonio Navas-Reyes is 21 years old and a Latino-American. He enjoys making art but knows that it takes a lot of practice so he practices every day. He mostly practices painting, drawing, and photography though he also does sculpture and 3-D design. He plans to transfer to JMU in the fall of 2016.

Andrea Quintanilla was published with her photograph "Tigers" in the 2015 edition of Calliope. She grew up in El Salvador, and moved to the U.S. looking for a new start. She now knows that art is her path and passion. In the Art Piece "Audrey" she took Audrey Hepburn as her inspiration using black markers on paper. She is a very hardworking person, like her family, and hopes to keep growing as an artist and to inspire others.

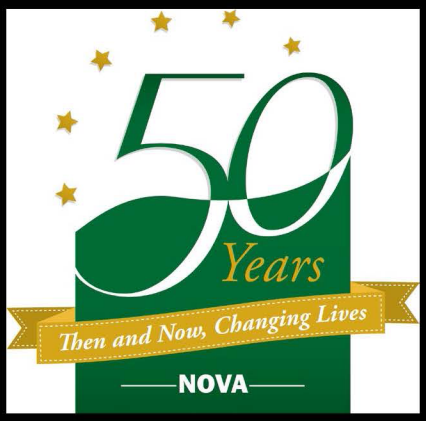
Noadia Saint-Louis is 21 years old. She came to United States a few years ago with her family for a better life. She loves to read and write poetry. She is attending NOVA and taking general studies course. Her dream is to graduate from George Mason University with a master's degree in nursing and to continue to write poetry and get better at writing. She hopes to write a book and to be the first person in her family to graduate from college.

Edna Squire is a travel enthusiast. She, along with her husband and two teenagers, has traveled to six continents. "Detached from Reality" chronicles one of her more notable exploits.

Calliope 2016 Contributors

Thao Trinh is 22 years old. She is an International student from Vietnam. Her major is Fine Arts and her dream is to become a game designer.

Alexander Tsapos is originally from Greece and came to the US about 4 years ago to major in Environmental and Sustainability Studies. His biggest passions are music production, writing, art, and learning new things about the world. His dream is to become an established music producer, finish a book in religious and scientific studies, and write a story about his grandfather's life who inspired him to write "Tick Tock." As he recently passed away, the impact his grandfather had in his life, and the things he learned from him inspired him to write this short story and he dedicates this piece to him.



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